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AHA: Save the Date!

**Saturday
March 19, 2016**

**Monthly
Chapter Meeting**

**First Unitarian Society
900 Mt. Curve Drive
Minneapolis**

**Doors open at 10:00 a.m.
Program 10:20 a.m.-noon**

HUMANISM:

A better life for all through education, democracy, free speech, reason, and science, without reliance on arbitrary dogmas, revelations, and faith.

Humanists of Minnesota Chapter Meeting

Work-Life Balance: An Evolving Discussion

by Benjamin Stafford, Carlson School of Management

Saturday, March 19th, 2016

"It's true hard work never killed anyone but I figure why take the chance?" - Ronald Reagan, former U.S. President
 "There's no such thing as work-life balance. There are work-life choices, and you make them, and they have consequences." – Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric

 Today's workers and employers face increasingly complex demands, and both have roles in fostering work-life balance. The evolving nature of work, workers, and job arrangements have the potential to impact society in many ways. At the March chapter meeting, Benjamin Stafford, a PhD student and researcher at the University of Minnesota Carlson School of Management, will provide some perspectives on a topic common to all—the nature and role of work in our lives!



So why spend Saturday morning talking about work? Benjamin's presentation will provide background and pose questions about how we can think about, and act toward, fostering a healthy work-life balance. First, the discussion will take aim at a history of how work and life have been conceptualized. Second, he will briefly take a look at how modern work-life balance is being researched in academia and practiced in organizations. Third, he will discuss the effects of evolving nature of work on balancing work in life, including debates surrounding living wages, and the rise of the self-employed service "gig" economy (think Uber). Lastly, he will pose the question of what work-life balance and career transitions may mean for those later in their careers (or even in semi-retirement). Expect challenging questions, illuminating information, and more than a touch of humor. (Let's just say it won't be too much work...)

Benjamin Stafford is a PhD student in Business Administration at the University of Minnesota, Carlson School of Management, where he studies work and organizations. Benjamin holds a BA in Business Administration and Master's degrees in Labor and Human Resources, and Public Policy and Management from The Ohio State University. His research interests include leadership and social networks in organizations, and energy policy. Ω

PRESIDENT'S

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Watch the news. Look around the world. Listen to the candidates who aspire to lead our nation. It can be demoralizing—to be sure. We humanists envision a world better than the everyday portrayal. But we mustn't lose sight of the fact that it isn't going to happen by magical or wishful thinking. As humanists we understand that it is up to us to create the kind of world we want to live in and leave for our children and heirs.

Every spring—and surely this spring—opportunities await us to make a difference in our state. The 2016 Minnesota legislative session begins March 8th. A multitude of lobbyists and non-profit interest groups, religious groups and business interests are all vying for attention at the state capitol as our legislators ponder bonding bills and consider contentious policies. It is imperative that we as humanists and naturalists—espousing reason and evidence-based decision making—are at the table. We need to get more involved, be active and visible advocates for compassionate and sustainable public policies.

Of course, there are others who share our same policy goals but don't necessarily espouse humanism. That doesn't diminish the need for our involvement. We can and should work in coalition with those who share our values in pursuing the common good. In fact, Humanists of Minnesota are members of the Second Chance Coalition which is working to restore voting rights for ex-felons and to reduce drug sentences. Their [Lobby Day](#) at the capitol is Tuesday, March 15th. I will be there—hopefully with more than one other fellow humanist—to show our support.

Then, as many of you know, Compassion and Choices of Minnesota has introduced a bill to support aid-in-dying in our own state. (For more information on that legislation, see page 6.) Humanists of Minnesota supports this legislation and we encourage all our members to weigh in on this issue with their legislators.

In addition to lobbying one's legislators at the state capitol, there are other opportunities for civic engagement. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency is hosting listening sessions around the state to engage Minnesotans in how we can best build a clean energy economy. International agreements are important but it's really at the local level where the rubber hits the road in putting policy into practice. Listening sessions are scheduled in St. Paul for [March 2nd](#) and in Minneapolis on [March 8th](#). Watch the Humanist Meetup site for details and come out to express your views and/or show your support for sustainability.

Also don't forget the annual Planned Parenthood Solidarity Day on Good Friday, March 25th, at their health clinic in St. Paul on Vandalia St. With women's health care options and choices under attack across the country, it is an important time for all supporters to come out of the woodwork and take a public stand.

Of course, few people are going to engage in more than one or two of the myriad issues that vie for our attention, but surely most of us can get involved with something. Encourage a friend to join you; activism is always better when you do it with fellow travelers. Send an e-mail, make a phone call, show up at the capitol, attend a hearing or take a stand at a rally. Pick an issue that you feel passionate about. Humanists are by definition about the business of human problem solving. It is how we find our purpose and meaning. We are co-creators of the world we want to live in. Let's promote the humanist vision far and wide this spring. Ω

2016 Humanists of Minnesota Board of Directors Election: Nominations are open!

By David Guell

A Nominations Committee has been selected (and approved by the membership) to identify a slate of candidates to serve on the Board starting in May. David Guell (chair), Suellen Carroll, Rohit Ravindran and Greg Hart have begun that work. Each year the four officer positions of President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary (each serving one year) are voted on. In addition, three at-large positions (which will serve for two years) are to be filled. Any candidate for a board position must be a member in-good-standing for at least one year at the time of taking office. Anyone interested in being considered for the Board should contact David Guell at dguell4@yahoo.com or 763-258-9631 before March 8th. The slate of candidates will be presented to the membership at the March chapter meeting and any further nominations from the floor will be accepted. Elections will take place at the April 16th chapter meeting. Get involved! HofMn needs you!

Announcements

DISCUSSION GROUPS ETC.

2nd Friday 5:00 p.m., *Humanist Happy Hour St. Paul*, Green Mill Restaurant & Bar, 57 Hamline Ave S.

4th Friday 5:00 p.m., *Humanist Happy Hour Minneapolis*, Salsa a La Salsa--2841 Hennepin Ave., Mpls.

2nd Saturday 10:30 a.m., *Blasphemers' Brunch*, Pizza Luce, 800 W 66th Street, Richfield

2nd Sunday 2:00 p.m., *Sunday Assembly*. First Unitarian Society. 900 Mt. Curve Avenue, Minneapolis.

1st Sunday, 9:00 a.m.-noon, *Lake Superior Freethinkers monthly meeting*. Radisson Hotel Duluth, Viking Room. For information contact Bill van Druten, (218) 724-4176.

1st Sunday, 10:00 a.m., *Central Minnesota Freethinkers, St. Cloud Coffee Social*. Check their website for details: cmfreethinkers.org or contact them at info@cmfreethinkers.org

Mondays, 5:00-6:30 p.m., *Atheists for Human Rights Happy Hour*, Ol' Mexico Restaurant, 1754 Lexington Ave., Roseville (just north of Larpenteur). Tables on terrace level. Call Paul Craven, (763) 788-8918.

1st and 3rd Mondays, 6:30 p.m., *Freethought Toastmasters Club*, Larpenteur Estates Party Room, 1276 Larpenteur Ave. W., St. Paul. Contact George Kane, nup@minn.net or (651) 488-8225.

2nd & 4th Mondays, 5:00-7:00 p.m., *Freethought Dinner Social*, Davanni's, 8605 Lyndale Ave So, Bloomington. Call Marilyn Nienkerk, (612) 866-6200.

1st Tuesday, 11:30 a.m.—1:00 p.m., *Freethought Lunch*, Old Country Buffet, County Road B2 between Fairview and Snelling. Call Marilyn Nienkerk, (612) 866-6200.

3rd Wednesday, 11:30 a.m., *Freethought Lunch*, Dragon House, 3950 Central Avenue NE, Columbia Heights. Call Bill Volna, (612) 781-1420.

2nd Thursday, evening, *Rochester Area Freethinkers (RAFT)*, Downtown Rochester Public Library, Meeting Room A. Contact Jim Salutz, jsalutz@aol.com or (507) 280-8012.

OTHER EVENTS

2nd Thursday, 7:00 p.m., *Humanists of Minnesota Board of Directors meeting*. Open to all members. Contact Audrey Kingstrom at akingstrom@comcast.net.

Thursdays, 7:00 p.m. (during school year), *Campus Atheists, Skeptics and Humanists (CASH)* general meeting. 3rd floor Coffman Memorial Union, 300 Washington Ave. SE, Minneapolis. Contact cash@cashumn.org.

Check out our Meetup events at <http://www.meetup.com/humanism-166>

Death and Dying Series

First Saturdays of the month (Oct. –June)
Rondo Community Library, St. Paul

March 5th @ 10:30 am
When Death Comes

At this sixth session, we will have guest presenters from MN Threshold Network and the Funeral Consumers Alliance (beyond cremation, home vigils and funerals, disposition of the body, burial options, organ donation, leaving body to science).

This series is designed to help humanists, agnostics, atheists and freethinkers prepare for the final chapter of one's life. While a "good death" may be best secured through living a "good life," we will explore the unique challenges of aging given the potential for increased frailty, debilitating illness and loss of independence—for oneself or for a loved one.

Through facilitated discussion, each session will focus on a particular end-of-life issue from creating health care directives, conducting conversations with family members, considering options for disposition of the body, planning memorial services and making ethical wills or legacy gifts. No medical or legal expertise will be provided, but instead, here is an opportunity to think out loud about our mortality and the pragmatic issues surrounding our impending deaths. For more information about the series, contact Audrey at akingstrom@comcast.net.

Maple Grove Discussion Group:

Saturday, March 12th, 10:00 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.: "Critical Thinking and the Media" with Lee Schafer, Star Tribune. Maple Grove Community Center, 12951 Weaver Lake Rd, room 124, Maple Grove 55311, \$5 donation. Register at landforsale@visi.com or call Laurie at (763) 420-6350.

"Humanist Views," our weekly Cable program, airs at **6:30 p.m. Mondays** on MTN Channel 75.





February Chapter Meeting

“Darwin’s Time Machine”

Summarized by Nathan Curland and
Scott Lohman

Sixty members and friends turned up at our February (Darwin’s month) Chapter meeting to hear evolutionary biologist Michael Travisano, from the University of Minnesota, discuss the current state of our understanding (and misunderstanding) of evolution and the work his laboratory has been doing to further that understanding.

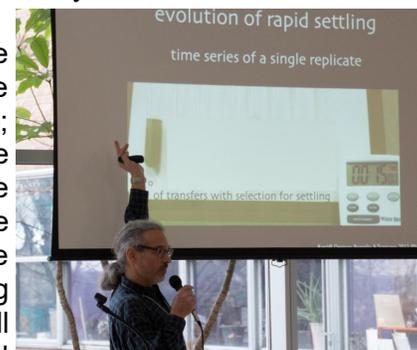
Prof. Travisano began by noting that the theory of evolution by natural selection is key to all aspects of understanding in modern biology. However, though the basic concept seems simple, the details are very complex and in this talk he discussed these issues. (The basic theory of evolution by natural selection is: there is variability within populations; some variation is inheritable; variation makes some more successful at survival/reproduction within an environment — hence the concept of “fitness”). Travisano came to biology from a physics background, transferring to a cancer research lab and then to whole organism studies. Eventually he came to realize that multicellularity is critical to understanding the diversity of life.

Although there is some debate about the definition of multicellularity, the general characteristics are: physical adhesion between cells; an active life history of the multicellular groupings; response to environmental selection; and division of labor among cells. Travisano stated that in the history of life on earth, there have been at least 25 independent transitions from single cell to multicellular organisms. However, this fact undermines one of the prevailing theories attached to evolution—that evolution results in more complex forms which supersede simpler forms, which then die out. Having so many independent transitions implies that evolution is a parallel as well as an ongoing process. Though over millions of years, we have evolved from unicellular creatures, the unicellulars we see today are not our ancestors, since their lines have also evolved over time. Furthermore, though Darwin attributed the complexity of the natural world to natural selection, complexity is not necessarily predicted by the theory. So an unanswered question of evolution is: what advantage to biological fitness does complexity bring? That is the focus of Travisano’s research.

Travisano then spent the rest of the time reviewing experiments his lab has done with simple microorganisms, yeast cells, to show the development of complexity. In one case described, gravity was used as the environmental factor, in that clumps of cells were more likely to fall to the bottom of the test tube than single cells. As the clumps became bigger, after they reached a critical size where they were more likely to create daughter clumps (this was called the ‘adult’ phase). Furthermore, the breakage into daughter cells was not random but happened at the sites of dead cells (which only occurred in the larger clumps). At each step of the process, the team was able to not only show the development of complexity but also why the complexity supported biological fitness. Travisano dubbed this process “Darwin’s Time Machine” since one can see the transition of phases in real time.

A lively Q&A period followed. One question dealt with his opinion on the concept of removing senescent cells to extend lifetimes (senescent cells are cells that no longer reproduce and are therefore thought to contribute to the aging process.) Travisano noted that this might be useful but we must take care because these type of cells might protect against some other environmental factor. For example, many skin cells are dead but protect our inner organs from external factors. Another questioner asked about his opinion on gene modification technology to which he replied that one must do a cost/benefit analysis since, due to inherent biological complexity, any change may have both positive and negative consequences.

The program ended with the drawing by Prof. Travisano of the winning tickets for the two Darwin bobblehead door prizes. This was followed by a Leanne Chin luncheon, organized by Mark Thoson and Poldi Gerard, for which approximately half the attendance participated. Ω



“...science as a whole is served by avoiding premature consensus. Every new idea deserves a forceful advocate...insisting on consensus from scientists can have unwanted consequences. Consider all the fluctuating advice we get about what foods to eat or cancer screening to perform. That’s what we get when we ask scientists for definite results before their time.”

- George Musser (2015)



Freethought History:

Humanism and the Scientific Revolution

By Paul Heffron, Chapter Historian

Two of the most momentous revolutions in human history were the advent of agriculture and the Scientific Revolution of the 17th century, according to a new book on which I will draw for this essay. The book is *The Invention of Science: A New History of the Scientific Revolution*

by David Wootton (HarperCollins, 2015), a professor at the University of York. Wootton's treatment of the history of science is revisionist. He supports the claim that the science that was invented in the 17th century was superior and more objective than anything that came before it in understanding the world and that continues to be true to the present time. This was a surprise to me because I thought this view was commonly accepted by most historians of science. But Wootton says the field has been dominated for the last 50 years by post-modernists, relativists, and others who regard science as a human cultural creation with no grounds for its claim to be a superior road to knowing understanding.

Humanists have thought of science as our best shot at knowing what is real and how things work. The first Humanist Manifesto of 1933 affirmed this. It accepted the Scientific Revolution and the scientific world view and its implied naturalism. In that context it pursued human well-being as its primary objective. Ever since, our humanist consensus statements have included that view. In spite of the misuses of science, the mistakes that needed corrections, the tentativeness of knowledge, etc. science has proved itself to modern people, except for some religious reactionaries and philosophical post-modernists.

So, how did we get modern science? We didn't have it before 1600. It was generally believed at that time that existing knowledge was complete and accurate. Imagine the shock when the student of astronomy, Tycho Brahe, in 1572 saw a bright star in the night sky that wasn't supposed to be there. He couldn't believe his eyes and thought he might be hallucinating. So he got some friends to look with him, and they saw the same thing. If knowledge of this star was missing in the current astronomy, what else might be lacking in the world picture based on the Bible, Aristotle, Ptolemy, etc.? Inquiring minds would soon find out. In 1608 the telescope and the microscope were invented. In 1609 Galileo made his own telescope and discovered facts that overthrew the existing dogma. New observations and experiments followed. The Scientific Revolution was underway.

About that same time the New World was being discovered. Curiously the word "discover" and the very concept of "discovery" were not part of the existing language and mind set. However, the explorations and discoveries of the New World meant there was a lot that was unknown and the idea of discovery needed to be brought into usage. Because of the invention of the printing press new discoveries through experiments and explorations could spread. In spite of the entrenched resistance and the Inquisition, the newly invented science proved to be superior and invaluable—right up to the present time.

We humanists think of ourselves as scientifically savvy. But we can sometimes succumb to the resistance to new discovery in science and cling to what we think are unassailable liberal or ecologically sound positions. George Erickson presented us with the case for the new approach to nuclear power using thorium. It was impressive. He also presented it on Humanist Talk, where many AHA humanists communicate online. There was general resistance to George's explanation and his support for the new type of nuclear energy. I was surprised that the old anti-nuclear attitude was so engrained that my fellow humanists couldn't even give fair consideration to a new scientifically-based approach to the possibility of safe and carbon-free nuclear energy. Bill Nye in his new book, *Unstoppable: Harnessing Science to Change the World* (St. Martin's Press, 2015) notes that we have to find something more than wind and solar for a new energy base and that we should consider thorium-based nuclear energy, instead of natural gas, as a possible bridge to the future. He says we need to overcome our ignorance and fear and should at least build one thorium nuclear plant as a test. That seems to me like the scientific attitude of openness to new discovery and is coherent with the ways of humanism. Ω



Highlights from the Board

*By Juliet Branca
Secretary*

From the February board meeting:

- A special board meeting will be held on February 29th for the purpose of reviewing, accepting, or rejecting the revised bylaws.
- As of January, the Treasurer reported an overall net gain of \$1,185.73
- The board approved a Nominating Committee consisting of; Suellen Carroll, Rohit Rovidran, Dave Guell, and Greg Hart .



The Campaign to Bring Aid in Dying to Minnesota

*By Janet Conn, President,
Compassion and Choices Minnesota*

The passage of California's End-of-Life Option Act last fall has given a boost to supporters of Aid in Dying all around the country. Activists in many states have been working for years to move the issue forward in the public eye and in their legislatures, and the much publicized death in 2014 of 29-year-old Brittany Maynard did just that. Suffering from an aggressive glioblastoma, she and her family moved from California to Oregon so that she could take

advantage of their Death with Dignity Act (DWDA). Determined lobbying and moving testimony by Maynard and other terminally ill individuals finally pushed the California law over the top.

A campaign led by Compassion & Choices to legalize aid in dying in Minnesota is one of several around the country that are gaining momentum. Last March, State Senator Chris Eaton introduced the MN Compassionate Care Act, while Representative Mike Freiberg introduced the companion bill in the House. Since then Sen. Eaton has held four listening sessions around the state to explain the bill to the public and get their comments. Watch for notices regarding a hearing on the bill in the Senate Health, Human Services and Housing Committee later this month.

The Minnesota bill follows the pattern established in Oregon 17 years ago, which has been working well ever since. It includes many protections to ensure that it is used appropriately by fully informed patients. What the bill does is give individuals in certain circumstances the option to obtain life-ending medication with a doctor's prescription. In order to qualify to obtain such a prescription, a person must be a mentally competent, terminally ill adult resident of the state. Two doctors must agree that the patient meets all these criteria, and is acting voluntarily, without coercion or pressure, and is able to take the medication herself. In addition, the patient must submit two written requests for the prescription, no less than two weeks apart.

The bill does not allow death by injection or other action by another person; it is not something one person is doing to another. Nor does it allow the decision to be made by anyone other than the patient. Thus it would not apply to those suffering from dementia, because they are not terminally ill while they are still mentally competent, and vice versa. It is not referred to as suicide, because the person is dying from a disease, not by choice.

Data from 17 years of experience in Oregon tell us that less than 1% of deaths there involve lethal prescriptions under the DWDA, and that about a third of people getting the prescriptions do not actually use them in the end. Seventy eight percent are dying from cancer, 90% are receiving hospice services, and the leading reasons they give for choosing aid in dying are loss of autonomy, inability to enjoy the things that make life worth living, and loss of dignity.

You can help bring aid in dying to Minnesota by introducing a resolution for it in your precinct caucus March 1st, letting your state legislators know that you support the bill (SF 1880/HF 2095), and attending legislature committee hearings. Follow us on Facebook – Compassion & Choices Minnesota – to learn about other events, news, and opportunities to get involved. Ω



Save the Date! May 26-29

*American Humanist Association
75th Annual Conference:
This year in Chicago!*

The American Humanist Association's 75th Annual conference is rapidly approaching. Celebrate this milestone in the city where it all started! This year's event will be held May 26-29 at the Hyatt Regency McCormick Place Hotel in Chicago, Illinois. Informative lectures, book signings, celebrity guests, networking opportunities, fun activities and more await conference attendees!

This year's impressive lineup of award winners and speakers will feature many well-known humanists and thinkers: Humanist of the Year, Prof. Jared Diamond; Humanist Heroine, Medea Benjamin; Humanist Arts Award winner, John de Lancie; Isaac Asimov Award winner, Prof. Elizabeth Loftus; Religious Liberty Award winner, John Selby Spong; Lifetime Achievement Award winner, Sen. Ernie Chambers.

The announcement of the keynote and a multitude of other speakers are still forthcoming. However, this conference is expected to be sold out and hotel rooms are going fast. For more information and to reserve your spot go to <http://conference.americanhumanist.org/> Ω

HUMANIST NEWS & VIEWS

Editor, Nathan Curland

Editorial Committee - Brad Bolin, Dale Handeen, Mark Thoson

Articles, letters, event notices and other writings are welcome. Send to: editor@humanistsofmn.org with the word "newsletter" in the subject line, or to P.O. Box 582997, Minneapolis, MN 55458-2997. (E-mail submissions are preferred.) All submissions must include the writer's full name, postal address, telephone number and e-mail address. All submissions become the property of this newsletter and cannot be returned. Submission deadline is the 22nd of the prior month.

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Upcoming Critical Thinking Club Meetings

Twin Cities Chapter. Sunday, March 6th, 10:00 a.m. to noon: "Religion and Domestic Abuse," by Nancy Bradshaw. Uptown Bryn Mawr Community Gathering Place, 400 Cedar Lake Rd South, Minneapolis.

West Metro Chapter. Saturday, March 26th, 10:00 a.m. to noon: "America's Science Phobia Ravages Children," by Mike Tikkanen, Kids at Risk Action. Ridge Point Apts. Meeting Room, 12800 Marion Lane W., Minnetonka.

Stillwater Chapter. Monday, March 14th, 7:00 p.m.: "America's Science Phobia Ravages Children," by Mike Tikkanen, Kids at Risk Action. Family Means Bldg., 1875 Northwestern Ave, Stillwater.

*For additional information, visit:
www.meetup.com/Critical-Thinking-Club/calendar*

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March 2016

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Your membership is vital to the growth of Humanism and the Humanist community. Our membership categories are:
(For categories at RH and above, married couples or domestic partners will be considered as one membership, if you so indicate.)

- (B) Budget, \$25.00
- (RI) Regular Individual, \$40.00
- (RH) Regular Household, \$60.00
- (S) Sustaining, \$100.00
- (P) Patron, \$250.00
- (BN) Benefactor, \$500.00
- (L) Life Membership, \$1000.00
- (T) Trial subscription for 3 months, just ask

*Full time students at an accredited institution can receive a complimentary subscription

For national or international membership write to:

American Humanist Association
1777 T Street NW
Washington, DC 20009-7125
www.americanhumanist.org

Council for Secular Humanism
PO Box 664
Amherst, NY 14226
www.secularhumanism.org

Please check the appropriate box, complete the information and mail with your check to Humanists of Minnesota, P.O. Box 582997, Minneapolis, MN 55458-2997.

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e-mail: _____

(for special announcements, blogs etc. Keeps you in touch!)

I would like my newsletter sent via email () (in color!)

Second Member at same address (for RH and above):

Visit our website at:
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