

FREELY SPEAKING

Space Coast Freethought Association

March 2008

Upcoming Events

Sunday, March 2

SCFA Monthly Meeting

1:30 in the park on Fee Ave. (just east of Babcock.)
Join us outside for our Eostre Egg Hunt.

Friday, March 7 & Saturday, March 8

American's United Meeting - 3 locations in Florida
Barry Lynn will speak on "How Hate and Confusion
Can Ruin Your Constitution: A Religious Freedom
Perspective on the Marriage Amendment."

Fri., March 7, 3:00pm - Unitarian Universalist
Congregation of Greater Naples, 6340 Napa Way.

Sat., March 8, 2:00pm - Jan Platt Library, 3910 S
Manhattan Ave, Tampa, FL.

Sat., March 8, 7:00pm - Good Samaritan Church,
Park Blvd & 61st St N, Pinellas Park, FL.

au.org/site/PageServer?pagename=fld_chapters_calendar

Sunday, March 9

SCFA Adopt-A-Road

10:00am at Palm Bay Rd. & Stack shopping center.

Thursday, March 20

Vernal Equinox

March 21 - 23

American Atheist Conference

Ellen Johnson, Richard Dawkins, and more.
Minneapolis, MN, atheists.org/conference/

Sunday, April 6

SCFA Monthly Meeting

1:30 at Melbourne Public Library on Fee Ave. We
will discuss the Legal Basis for Church/State Sepa-
ration.

Sunday, April 13

SCFA Adopt-A-Road

10:00am at Palm Bay Rd. & Stack shopping center.

Sunday, May 1

SCFA Monthly Meeting & National Day of Reason Dinner

This month's meeting will be held during the Na-
tional Day of Reason Dinner.

Want to keep informed of SCFA events? Join
groups.yahoo.com/group/scfa_announce/

SCFA News

Palm Bay City Council Invocations

It has come to SCFA's attention that the Palm Bay
City Council has been starting their meetings with a
religious (usually Christian) prayer. SCFA has con-
tacted American's United about this issue, and we
are currently monitoring the city council to gather
more information on their practices.

Sign the virtual wall

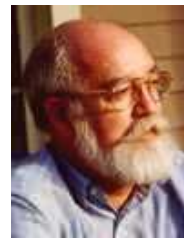
We now have ~200 signatures on our wall. Fellow
church/state supporters from across the country
and Canada have signed our wall. See what they
have to say at: spacecoastfreethought.org/brick.html.

American's United "First Freedom First"

Sign the petition at any SCFA meeting or the AU
website, www.au.org.

This Month in Freethought History

Daniel Dennett, born March 28, 1942



"I recently took part in a conference
in Seattle that brought together lead-
ing scientists, artists and authors to
talk candidly and informally about
their lives to a group of very smart
high school students. Toward the end
of my allotted 15 minutes, I tried a
little experiment. I came out as a
bright [a person with a world-view that is naturalis-
tic rather than supernaturalistic].

Many students came up to me afterwards to
thank me ... for "liberating" them. I hadn't realized
how lonely and insecure these thoughtful teenagers
felt. They'd never heard a respected adult say, in an
entirely matter of fact way, that he didn't believe in
God. I had calmly broken a taboo and shown how
easy it was. -- "The Bright Stuff"



Printed on recycled paper.

Church-State Update

*A Report on Church-State Legal Issues
Affecting Brevard County Citizens*

National

Calif. pastor's Huckabee endorsement draws IRS probe (2/13)

"Southern Baptist pastor Wiley Drake said yesterday that he was being investigated by the Internal Revenue Service for endorsing GOP presidential hopeful Mike Huckabee in a press release written on church stationery.... On Aug. 11, Drake wrote a press release on letterhead from the First Southern Baptist Church in Buena Park that announced his personal endorsement of Huckabee and asked all Southern Baptists to get behind the candidate."
(AP)

Abstinence restrictions loosened on AIDS program (2/28)

"The original PEPFAR law's requirement that one-third of prevention dollars be used to promote abstinence set off a rhetorical war between the program's State Department leaders and much of the rest of the AIDS community.... The reauthorized bill requires PEPFAR's chief to provide "balanced funding" for prevention and to ensure that abstinence and faithfulness activities "are implemented and funded in a meaningful and equitable way." If a country spends less than 50 percent of its sexual-transmission prevention funding on the promotion of abstinence and faithfulness, the program must justify that decision to Congress."
(Boston Globe)



Can you stand an egg on end on the vernal equinox?

Sure you can, just like this guy did. Of course, you can do this any other day of the year too. There's nothing special about the vernal equinox when it comes to performing this trick.

badastronomy.com/bad/misc/egg_spin.html

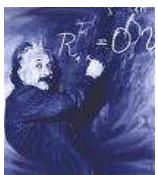
Florida

Amendments to remove religious protections being considered (2/14)

"The Florida Taxation and Budget Reform Commission is considering two proposed constitutional amendments that would allow Florida to use public funds to support religious schools and other faith-based ministries.... The efforts to amend the Florida Constitution are being led by former members of Gov. Jeb Bush's administration. Bush pushed a statewide private school voucher program during his terms in office. The Bush voucher proposal was found unconstitutional by state courts in 2005."
(AU)

'Evolution' to make debut in Fla. science standards (2/20)

"Florida schoolchildren will be taught that evolution is a 'scientific theory' through a compromise yesterday that left neither side satisfied although supporters of Charles Darwin's big idea were much happier than its opponents.... [T]he new standards require more in-depth teaching of evolution and hold that it is 'the fundamental concept underlying all of biology and is supported by multiple forms of scientific evidence.' That statement rankled opponents, some of whom had urged the State Board of Education to add an 'academic freedom' provision that would have let teachers 'engage students in a critical analysis of that evidence.' Evolution supporters, including mainstream scientists and clergy, told the board before the 4-3 vote that the academic-freedom proposal was a wedge designed to open the door for injecting religious arguments into science studies.... As originally written by a committee of scientists and educators, Florida's new standards referred to evolution without the "scientific theory" qualifying language. The standards also contain a section noting that a scientific theory is a well-supported and accepted explanation of nature, not simply a claim."
(AP)



Quote: Albert Einstein, born March 14, 1879

"I cannot imagine a God who rewards and punishes the objects of his creation, whose purposes are modeled after our own -- a God, in short, who is but a reflection of human frailty. Neither can I believe that the individual survives the death of his body, although feeble souls harbor such thoughts through fear or ridiculous egotisms."

Pagan origins of Easter:

From religioustolerance.org/easter1.htm

The name "Easter" originated with the names of an ancient goddess and god. The Venerable Bede (672-735 CE), a Christian scholar, first asserted in his book *De Ratione Temporum* that Easter was named after Eostre (aka Eastre). She was the Great Mother Goddess of the Saxon people in Northern Europe. Similarly, the "Teutonic dawn goddess of fertility [was] known variously as Ostare, Ostara, Oster, Eostra, Eostre, Eostur, Eastr, Eastur, Austron and Ausos." Her name was derived from the ancient word for spring: "eastre." Similar goddesses were known by other names in ancient cultures around the Mediterranean, and were celebrated in the springtime. Some were:

- Aphrodite from ancient Cyprus
- Ashtoreth from ancient Israel
- Astarte from ancient Greece
- Demeter from Mycenae
- Hathor from ancient Egypt
- Ishtar from Assyria
- Kali from India
- Ostara, a Norse goddess of fertility

Many religious historians believe that the death and resurrection legends were first associated with Attis, many centuries before the birth of Jesus. They were simply grafted onto stories of Jesus' life in order to make Christian theology more acceptable to Pagans. Others suggest that many of the events in Jesus' life that were recorded in the gospels were lifted from the life of Krishna, the second person of the Hindu Trinity.

Previous Events

Sunday, February 3

SCFA Monthly Meeting

We celebrated Darwin's birthday. We discussed the Florida Science Standards and how its inclusion of evolution is being resisted by some Florida communities. And we had cake.

Sunday, February 10

SCFA Adopt-A-Road



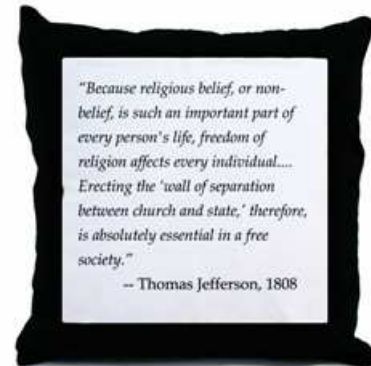
Quote: James Madison, born March 16, 1751

"Freedom arises from the multiplicity of sects, which pervades America and which is the best and only security for religious liberty in any society. For where there is such a variety of sects, there can not be a majority of any one sect to oppress and persecute the rest."

Purchase SCFA merchandise

spacecoastfreethought.org/store.html

We have mugs, t-shirts, license plate covers, a Jefferson throw pillow, and our featured item:



18"x18" Jefferson throw pillow
Only \$17.99.

Join our discussion list online at
groups.yahoo.com/group/SpaceCoastFreethought/

Join SCFA! Annual membership is \$15 for one, \$25 for a family, and \$10 for seniors and students. Join using our web form at
spacecoastfreethought.org/donate.html

SCFA Board of Directors

Doug Cramer, president
Bob Long, vice-president
Toni Sweeney, treasurer
Cameo Johnson-Cramer, secretary
Steven Brown
Mike Sweeney

The board of directors meets monthly to discuss the future of SCFA. We plan meeting agendas, develop and implement advertising strategies, decide on social opportunities for our members, and more.

If you have any input for the SCFA board of directors, please contact us at info@spacecoastfreethought.org or use the contact form at our website, spacecoastfreethought.org.

Volunteering & Activism

What you can do to help strengthen the wall of separation between religion and government and put a positive face on atheism.

Report problems

Let us know if there is a church/state separation problem in Brevard County. We can help you determine the best course of action. We are also an associate member of American's United and would be happy to help you work with them if necessary.

Watch for problems

Watch school board and city council meetings. Either attend in person or watch on cable television. If you regularly watch a particular meeting, let us know so we don't duplicate effort.

TV schedule: www.brevardcounty.us/scgtv/schedule.cfm

School Board archive: www.brevard.k12.fl.us/fp-includes/events/archive.html

Write letters to the editor

Respond to a negative letter or article, or write one about whatever's on your mind. Let the rationalist point of view be heard and let people know we exist. Remember to:

- Keep to one point - don't ramble
- Keep it polite - people often respond better
- Keep it accurate - quote statistics and sources
- Keep it positive - don't just say what's wrong, offer solutions

Florida Today

www.floridatoday.com/forms/services/letters.htm

They will contact you to confirm your letter.

Distribute literature

Most public libraries allow brochures. Just check with the libraries, who will need to approve the brochure firsts. If you would like to adopt a library, let us know and we'll either send you our brochures or you can print them off yourself. If you know of another place that allows brochures, please let us know.

THE ROYAL INSTITUTION LECTURES FOR CHILDREN



Richard Dawkins presents a series of lectures on life, the universe, and our place in it. It's available online for free.

richarddawkins.net/growingupintheuniverse

Virtual wall

Sign our virtual wall of separation, spacecoastfreethought.org/brick.html

Book drive

Bring your used freethought books to any SCFA event for collection.

Adopt-a-Road

Help us clean up Palm Bay Rd. We meet most months in front of the old Atlanta Bread Co. on the second Sunday of the month. Let people know freethinkers care about their community. Schedule: spacecoastfreethought.org/adoptaroad.html

Tell people you're a freethinker

Wear shirts and buttons that espouse your views. Put a bumper sticker on your car. Put your favorite freethought quote or website in your email signature. Tell your friends and family. Let people know that freethinkers are all around them.

Quote: Douglas Adams, born March 11, 1952



"In England we seem to have drifted from vague wishy-washy Anglicanism to vague wishy-washy Agnosticism-- both of which I think betoken a desire not to have to think about things too much." -- from American Atheist interview

"Isn't it enough to see that a garden is beautiful without having to believe that there are fairies at the bottom of it too?" -- from *Last Chance To See*

Space Coast Freethought Association

(SCFA) is a nonprofit community of reason-based individuals organized to facilitate social interaction, promote the non-theistic, rationalist viewpoint as a valid contribution to public discourse, reinforce the First Amendment guarantee of separation between government and religion through education and activism, and work in coalition with like-minded organizations where joint action is needed to achieve these goals.