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Group Moderator
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Philly Celebrates Darwin's 200th Birthday!

Nine scientific, cultural, and educational institutions around Philadelphia have been celebrating a Year of Evolution (April '08-May'09) in honor of Charles Darwin's 200th birthday. This February will mark not only Darwin's birthday, but the 150th anniversary of the publication of *The Origin of Species*. HAGP would like to highlight some of the upcoming events and the institutions hosting these events.



U Penn Museum: In years past, HAGP has organized a group of people to attend the both fun and educational *Darwin Day and Evolution Teach In* at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthrology. This year is no exception! This is a family friendly event which includes talks, films, gallery tours, a birthday cake, and "Darwin" himself! The event begins Sunday, February 15 at 1pm and is FREE and open to the public.

Continued on page 2.

HumanLight/Winter Solstice Party 2008

HAGP's 2008 HumanLight and Winter Solstice party was featured on on NPR's Morning Edition! The segment can still be heard on the website: www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=98627236. Also, hear more interviews at journalist Brad Linder's blog: www.bradlinder.net/2008/12/humanlight-secular-holiday-in-december.html

Continued on page 3.



The Pax family lights the candles representing *reason*, *compassion*, and *hope* at the HumanLight party.

Philly Celebrates Darwin's 200th Birthday, continued:

Also at the U Penn Museum is *Darwin's Legacy in 21st Century Biology*. This is a two day colloquium featuring fifteen scientific experts from around the country and world. The lectures will cover a wide variety of topics which relate to how the work of Charles Darwin continues to inspire today's biological research. Lecture topics include: plant breeding systems, expression of emotions and cognition in primates, molecular evolution, speciation, retrotransposons in humans, the evolution of pathogens and HIV, and human variation. One speaker of perhaps particular interest to Humanists could be Kenneth R. Miller, author of *Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground between God and Evolution*. The colloquium runs Thursday, February 12, and Friday, February 13, both days at 9:00am. The cost of admission is \$8. for adults and \$5. for students and senior citizens.

The U Penn Museum is also featuring a special exhibition called *Surviving: The Body of Evidence*, an interactive, multimedia exhibition about the process of evolution and its impact on people today. Museum admission is free on Sundays.

The address of the U Penn Museum is 3260 South Street Philadelphia, PA 19104, the phone number is 215-898-4000, and the website is www.museum.upenn.edu.

The Academy of Natural Sciences: Dr. Ehrlich, a well known environmental scientist and author of *The Population Bomb* (published in 1968) will present: *The Dominant Animal: Human Evolution and the Environment in the Obama Administration* Thursday, February 5 at 5:30pm. This is a FREE event open to the public.

Also at the Academy of Natural Sciences is a **Free Panel Discussion: Teaching Evolution In Elementary School** Monday, March 30 - In conjunction with the bicentennial of Charles Darwin's birth, The Academy of Natural Sciences will host a free panel discussion on teaching evolution to elementary schoolchildren. Panelists are Jacquie Genovesi, the Academy's Senior Director of Education, and Dr. Colin Purrington, associate professor of evolutionary biology at Swarthmore College. Genovesi, with her team of museum educators, sets the curriculum for the Academy's

science lessons to visiting schoolchildren and for outreach programs. The panelists will discuss philosophical and practical obstacles to introducing evolution in elementary schools and will offer tips and advice for teachers and parents on ways to overcome them.

The address of the Academy of Natural Sciences is 1900 Benjamin Franklin Parkway (N. 19th Street and Race Street) Philadelphia, PA 19103. The phone number is 215-299-1000 and the website is www.ansp.org

For full information about all the events happening for the Year of Evolution around Philadelphia, visit www.yearofevolution.com

PhillyCOR is also sponsoring our own special speaker in celebration of Darwin Day:

"Evolving a Genius: The Extraordinary Early life of Charles Darwin"

Doug Schwartz has been President and CEO of the School of American Research for 34 years, a thriving, internationally recognized campus for the study of advanced anthropology and Native American art. Schwartz is currently touring the country with his presentation on the life and genius of Charles Darwin.



Friday, February 20, 7pm
Host: Secular Society of Temple University
Location: on Temple's campus, specifics TBA

HumanLight/Winter Solstice Party 2008, continued:

The PhillyCOR leadership has decided that in 2009, HumanLight will return to being an HAGP-hosted event (rather than a PhillyCOR event.) Reasons primarily include the location near Willow Grove and the Humanist focus of the event. However, the other PhillyCOR members will continue to promote HAGP's HumanLight party.

The HAGP Board of Directors will be reviewing the list of comments and suggestions for HumanLight 2009.

Some suggestions for changes to far include having live music which is more in-line with the values celebrated by HumanLight, and having a more participatory program where the audience takes a more active role in activities

If you have input that you'd like to share or are interested in being on the 2009 HumanLight planning committee, let us know! 215-475-2573 or email admin@hagp.org.



Volunteers for HAGP and other PhillyCOR members who attended the party proudly hold up their thank-you gifts for this photograph. The gift was an original print by celebrant Martha Knox which featured hands and a quote from Robert G. Ingersoll reading: "The hands that help are better than the lips that pray."

The people in this photo actually only represent less than half of all of PhillyCOR 2008 volunteers. Without the donated time, ideas, and works of these individuals (and of course monetary donations), our secular community would not be the success that it is. Thanks to everyone who volunteers and/or donates to HAGP and our sister organizations in PhillyCOR!



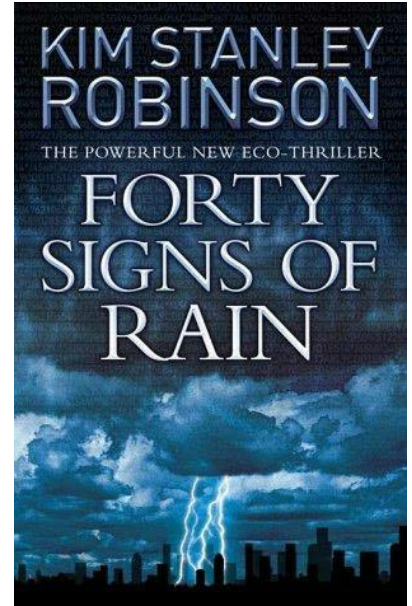
Tony Hileman, former Executive Director of The American Humanist Association, former Senior Leader at the NY Ethical Society gives the keynote address, met with much praise.



Banners represent the larger secular community in Greater Philadelphia: HAGP, PhillyCOR, and the Freethought Society.

Reading the *Forty Signs of Rain* by Brian Bohmueller

Kim Stanley Robinson's *Mars* trilogy captivated me several years ago providing a solid speculative fiction account of the exploration, terraforming and colonization of our sister planet, complete with the intricacies of humans and humanity as they execute these momentous steps. *Forty Signs of Rain*, the first installment in his latest trilogy takes a step back to our current planet of inhabitation with an engaging account of science, politics and the human animal while confronting significant global climate change. One might expect upheaval tales in such a novel. Instead, Robinson more subtly explores the realms where science and politics overlap in America as a chaotic horizon approaches. In fact, most of the action of this tale occurs inside the National Science Foundation, private science labs, and the minds of contemplative humans. Factor in some Buddhist wisdom and evolutionary psychology and, yes, an eye-opening weather event and you'll see why this book was a page turner. *Forty Signs of Rain* left me positively inspired that climate change is an issue our world can wake up to confront. It also left me wanting for more as I will be picking up the sequel, *Fifty Degrees Below* at my local library soon. If you are looking for a speculative fiction novel with real science and current context, I highly recommend you check this series out.



HAGP introduces a new monthly event:

Transhumanist Discussion Group

First Meeting:

Discussion of *Redesigning Humans: Choosing our genes, changing our future* by Gregory Stock

Moderator: Will Wieland

Sunday, February 8, 6pm

Kelly Writers House

3805 Locust Walk (U Penn's campus)

Philadelphia, PA

About Transhumanism:

Human enhancement techniques and other emerging technologies will transform the human condition. We will modify and improve our minds and bodies in increasingly powerful ways. How will this impact our culture? Will current inequalities be remedied or new, more vast ones be created? Who will be left behind? Transhumanism is a movement that advocates the use of technology to enhance the human body and mind.

Transhumanists also confront the ethical questions that arise in the creation of a posthuman world and the transformation of our identities.

Contact: transhumanism@hagp.org



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Express Yourself While Helping To Promote HAGP

Back in October, Fred Edwords, communications director of the American Humanist Association, gave a very informative and engaging talk on how to attract positive media attention. Inspired by this presentation, our President Joe Fox went to work on a lengthy letter to the editor entitled "Children taught pseudoscience" in response to an article about a pastor teaching Creationism to kids. Joe's letter was published in the *Intelligencer* soon after and his byline mentioned HAGP.

You, too, can make your voice heard in the community on issues important to nontheists *and* let the public know that organizations such as HAGP exist in this region. We urge you to start writing letters today!

TIPS ON WRITING LETTERS TO THE EDITOR from www.americanhumanist.org/khec/lettercenter.php

Know the policy of the paper regarding publishing letters to the editor. Some papers have specific requirements about the length of letters, whether they are typed or handwritten, and will not publish a letter if you do not include your full name, address, and phone number (although your address and phone number would never be printed).

Be timely. A letter to the editor has the best chance of being printed if it is in response to a recent article, op-ed, or editorial. (If the letter is a response, be sure to mention the name and date of the article in the first line of your letter.) You can also capitalize on recent news, events, or anniversaries. For example, the anniversary of an Act or other landmark legislation, the introduction of new related legislation, or the release of a new report that has implications on the issue provide good hooks for writing a letter to the editor.

Stay on message. Be sure your letters are concise, informative, and to the point. Focus on one subject. Keep the length to no more than three or four paragraphs. Make your first line short and compelling, and do not be afraid to be controversial.

Get personal. When it comes to local or regional publications, community is an especially big focus for newspapers. Editors often prefer, and thus print, letters that demonstrate local relevance. Also, by showing the importance of your message to local issues, it will likely have a greater impact on readers.

- Use local statistics.
- Use personal stories.
- Use names of legislators or other public officials where relevant.

Use your credentials. If you have expertise in the area you are writing about, state it. Follow up. Do not be discouraged if your letter is not printed. You can send a revised letter with a different angle at a later date. If your letter is published, you might want to send a copy to your local and national politicians, with a personal note attached. But certainly [e-mail](#) the published version to the "Your Published Letters" section of this website so we can post it here. We'd like the world to know about your media success!

What is the Humanist Creative Arts Circle?

Primarily it is a monthly discussion group for artistically inclined humanists to share and critique each others' creative writing, as well as artwork and music.

We also hope to plan a week-long summer retreat where members can focus more intensely on their projects in a supportive peer environment.

That said, the Circle can potentially expand into being whatever its participants decide, and is open to other projects such as group outings to inspiring locations, organizing performances and art exhibitions, or any other ideas involving the creative arts.

Space is limited so please RSVP by calling 215-475-2573 or by email humanistmarf@gmail.com.



Wednesday, January 21, 7pm
Tuesday, February 17, 7pm
Tuesday, March 17, 7pm

Kelly Writers House (U Penn's campus)
3805 Locust Walk, Philadelphia, PA

Meet Fellow Humanists & Like-minded Freethinkers

First Saturday of each month:
Movie Night at Giant Superstore
2nd Floor Community Room
315 York Road
Willow Grove, PA 19090

Movie night is a showing of independent films and documentaries, utilizing wide-screen projection, concerning the issues of Humanistic interest – followed by spirited a discussion. Topics such as human evolution, the occupation of Iraq, the media, religion and other world and political events.

Second Saturday of each month:
Luncheon at the Olive Garden
2328 W. Moreland Road
Willow Grove, PA

Informal lunches that allow members to interact outside the formal meetings and socialize with other Humanists. Occasionally, HAGP business is conducted after lunch.

Third Saturday of each month:
Secular Book Club at Barnes and Noble
102 Park Avenue
Willow Grove, PA

The Book club is a joint event with The Freethought Society of Greater Philadelphia. We discuss books relevant to values, issues, history, etc. These meetings are designed to build a stronger secular community, develop our thoughts more coherently, and embrace our history. Books are usually chosen two months in advance by the group. Following the meeting, join us for food/drink/socializing at the Macaroni Grill - everyone is welcome.

Last Sunday of each month:
Program Meeting
Upper Moreland Library
109 Park Avenue
Willow Grove, PA

Our monthly speakers cover a wide variety of subjects. This is an opportunity for group members to come together with each other; become educated on a topic by hearing from a speaker; or discuss issues and explore ideas. Following the meeting, join us for food/drink/socializing at the Mandarin Garden - everyone is welcome.

JANUARY

Sat. Jan. 17, 7 pm: Secular Book Club - Discussion of *The Devil in Dover: An Insider's Story of Dogma v. Darwin in Small-town America* by Lauri Lebo

SPECIAL NOTE: The author will be speaking!
Barnes and Noble, 102 Park Avenue, Willow Grove, PA 19090

Sun. Jan. 25, 1:30pm: HAGP Program Meeting - David Silverman, spokesperson for American Atheists, speaking on "Atheism in the New America." Silverman will speak in part about how the election went for Atheists, what challenges Atheists still face, and battlefields in the future. This will be an "oration" which has been requested by the Library of Congress, and the video will be stored for posterity there, along with orations and sermons from other religious and nonreligious groups.

Upper Moreland Library, 109 Park Ave. Willow Grove, PA 19090

FEBRUARY

Tues. Feb. 3, 7pm: Freethought Society of Greater Philadelphia Program Meeting: **Jason Schnittker on Mental Illness** - Americans know more about mental illness. We recognize that genes play an important role and increasingly see the value of psychiatric medication. In short, Americans are beginning to see mental illness as an "illness" much like any other. So why aren't Americans more accepting? Mr. Schnittker will review

the empirical literature on public beliefs surrounding mental illness, focusing on survey data. The key to resolving the paradox of contemporary beliefs lies in understanding the uncertain implications of diseased-focused frameworks. Genetic arguments, in particular, have complex relationships with tolerance--their meaning depends highly on the specific symptoms being considered. Because of the blunt nature of the forces propelling the public's acceptance of a biomedical view, altering beliefs about the etiology of mental illness is unlikely, on its own, to increase tolerance.

Jason Schnittker is an Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania. He is broadly interested in the social causes of health and illness, as well as public beliefs surrounding health and health care. His recent work has considered assorted topics, including the social and genetic determinants of well-being, the effects of incarceration on physical and mental health, and trends in women's health as they relate to trends in work and family.

Ludington Library 5 South Bryn Mawr Avenue, Bryn Mawr, PA



Freethought Society
of Greater Philadelphia

Sat. Feb. 7, 7pm: HAGP Movie Night showing *Saved!*, a light-hearted indie comedy about teens facing some serious issues while attending a Christian high school.
2nd Floor Community Room at the Giant Superstore
315 York Road, Willow Grove, PA

Meet Fellow Humanists & Like-minded Freethinkers

Sun. Feb. 8, 6 pm: First meeting of the Transhumanist Discussion Group (see page 3 of this newsletter for more info) - Discussion of *Redesigning Humans: Choosing our genes, changing our Future* by Gregory Stock. Moderator Will Wieland.

Kelly Writers House

3805 Locust Walk, Philadelphia, PA
(University of Pennsylvania campus)

Sat. Feb. 14, NOON: HAGP's Informal Luncheon at the Olive Garden

2328 W. Moreland Road
Willow Grove, PA 19090

Sun. Feb. 17, 6 pm: Second meeting of the Humanist Creative Arts Circle. This is an informal meeting where individuals share and critique each other's art, music, and creative writing. Open to the public, **but please RSVP** to Martha by calling 215-475-2473 or emailing humanistmarf@gmail.com since space is limited.

Kelly Writers House

3805 Locust Walk, Philadelphia, PA
(University of Pennsylvania campus)

Thursday Feb. 19, 7pm Philadelphia Atheist Meetup monthly meeting. This is an informal gathering where freethinkers can network and socialize with each other. Cosi, 4th Street and Chestnut Street Philadelphia, PA



Fri. Feb. 20, 7 pm: PhillyCoR hosts a special speaker in honor of Darwin Day. Doug Schwartz will give his presentation "Evolving a Genius: The Extraordinary Early life of Charles Darwin." See page 2 for details. Temple University, Philadelphia
Exact Location TBA

Sat. Feb. 21, 2 pm: PhACT (Philadelphia Association for Critical Thinking) monthly program: ***Integrative Oncology: Complementary Therapies and Botanicals in Cancer Care*** - Dr. Barrie R. Cassileth will discuss Integrative Oncology: Complementary Therapies and Botanicals in Cancer Care. Dr. Cassileth is Chief of Integrative Medicine Service at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, New York. She actively works with the FDA and other federal agencies in the nearly impossible task of controlling quackery in cancer treatment.

Room S2-03 (second floor) Winnet Student Life building, Community College of Philadelphia, 17th and Spring Garden Streets, Philadelphia, PA

Sat. Feb 21, 7 pm: Secular Book Club - Discussion of *This Common Secret: My Journey as an Abortion Doctor* by Susan Wicklund
Barnes and Noble, 102 Park Avenue
Willow Grove, PA 19090

Community Service Volunteer Opportunities with the Secular Service Club

Monthly Work Days at Philabundance's Warehouse
302 West Berks Street Philadelphia PA:

Saturday, February 7

Friday, March 6

Saturday, April 4

Volunteers must wear sneakers

Call Martha at 215-475-2573 or email humanistmarf@gmail.com to sign up for any of these volunteer opportunities.

Sponsored by:



www.phillycor.org

Meet Fellow Humanists & Like-minded Freethinkers

Sun. Feb. 22, 1:30pm: HAGP Program Meeting – Our speaker is Ron Steelman, President of Red Bank Humanists in Red Bank, NJ. Ron will give a presentation about his local organization's video project. This will hopefully set the groundwork for HAGP to begin our own video project to be used for educating, advertising, and community building.

Upper Moreland Library, 109 Park Ave.
Willow Grove, PA 19090

MARCH

Sun. March. 1, 6 pm: Second meeting of the Transhumanist Discussion Group (see page 3 of this newsletter for more info) – Topic TBA
Kelly Writers House
3805 Locust Walk, Philadelphia, PA
(University of Pennsylvania campus)

Tues. March. 3, 7pm: Freethought Society of Greater Philadelphia Program Meeting: Keith Pacheco on Nonviolent Communication
Ludington Library 5 South Bryn Mawr Avenue,
Bryn Mawr, PA



Sat. March 7, 7pm: HAGP Movie Night showing *Lake of Fire*, a documentary about abortion in the United States.

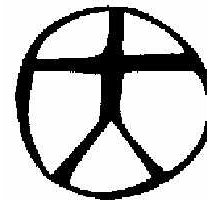
2nd Floor Community Room at the Giant Superstore
315 York Road, Willow Grove, PA

Sat. March 14, NOON: HAGP's Informal Luncheon at the Olive Garden
2328 W. Moreland Road
Willow Grove, PA 19090

Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

1906 South Rittenhouse Square,
Philadelphia
215-735-3456
www.phillyethics.org

Weekly Platform meetings are held at 11 a.m. September through May. Ethical Society Platforms are free and open to the public. A coffee hour follows for discussion and conversation. *Ethics for Children* classes start each Sunday morning at 10:45AM; child care provided for children to seven years. Free parking is available with a permit you can get inside the Society's office. Classical piano interludes are performed by Katarzyna Marzec-Salwinski.



Socrates Cafe

Facilitated by Sam Frederick
Springfield Township Library
1600 Paper Mill Rd, Glenside, PA
Mondays, 7pm (except holidays)

Socrates Café is a worldwide movement that fosters independent, informal community discussion groups under the overarching topic: "What is the good way to live life?" The local discussions approach the big topic by discussing more specific subjects like 'Integrity,' "If no one is perfect, what is perfection?" and the like. Participants contribute questions and observations based on their own experience. Participants learn new perspectives from each other and then make up their own minds. An extraordinary group culture of reason, honesty, compassion and trust can and has developed among strangers.

HAGP fully supports the spirit in which these discussions are conducted and encourages all curious and open minds to attend! To learn more about the Socrates Cafe movement, visit this website:
<http://www.philosopher.org>

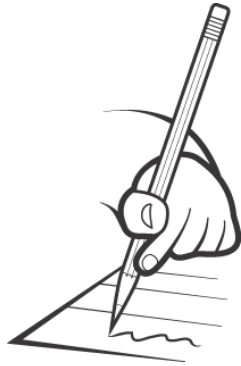
Humanist Celebrant Available

Martha Knox, Certified Humanist Celebrant, would like to remind you that she is available for all your life passage ceremonies, including weddings and commitment ceremonies, baby namings, coming-of-age celebrations, funerals/memorial services, and even divorce celebrations.

Discounts for HAGP members! Contact her at Celebrant@hagp.org.



Now Taking Submissions



The HAGP newsletter is taking your submissions of stories, book or film reviews, poems, jokes, or anything else you'd like to share with the HAGP community.

Either email submissions to celebrant@hagp.org or mail them to:

HAGP
PO Box 161
Willow Grove, PA
19090-0161



Join the fun on Meetup! Go to <http://humanism.meetup.com/152/boards/> to sign up for HAGP's group and be updated on our ongoing events.



HAGP proudly supports Tabor Children's Services, Inc., a private nonprofit child welfare agency serving children, youth, young adults and families. Tabor Children's Services is a non-profit, non-sectarian organization that serves children and families in need in the southeastern Pennsylvania and nearby New Jersey areas.

To learn more about the important work of these dedicated people, visit www.tabor.org.

JOIN HAGP TODAY!

HAGP is now a Member Chapter of the American Humanist Association (AHA)!

In order to become a member of HAGP, individuals and families must also become members of the AHA.

Join the AHA today at the website: <https://www.americanhumanist.org/secure/joinform.php>. Membership is only \$35.00 for first time members who join online! If you join online, make sure to check the box "I want to join my local Membership Chapter" and then select "Humanist Association of Greater Philadelphia" If you join by phone, call 1-800-837-3792 and make sure to mention your desire to also be a member of HAGP.

If you're already a member of the AHA, great! Just let Lindsay Gemberling in the AHA office know that you also want to be a member of HAGP: 1-800-837-3792 or lgemberling@americanhumanist.org.

You can also donate the dues you used to pay to HAGP. Donate at www.hagp.org or by mail (address below.)

Don't want to join the AHA, but want to be affiliated with HAGP? Become a *Friend of HAGP!* Friends can't vote in annual elections or run for the Board, but they receive all other benefits of HAGP membership. Those who would like to become a Friend, simply send a check (\$15 for individuals, \$25 for families) to:

Humanist Association of Greater Philadelphia
P.O. Box 161
Willow Grove, PA 19090-0161