



# THE HUMANIST SOCIETY OF NEW MEXICO NEWSLETTER

February 2014

A Membership Chapter of the American Humanist Association

<http://humanistsocietyofnm.org/>

<http://hsnm.wordpress.com>

[zelda@amadorbooks.com](mailto:zelda@amadorbooks.com)

## **HSNM Meetings in Albuquerque**

*HSNM meetings are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted.*

### Saturday, February 8

10:15 AM - 12:15 PM

#### **HSNM Informal Meeting**

For HSNM members and their guests.

For invitation or questions, please contact Zelda Gatuskin at 505-344-6102

Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice

202 Harvard SE. Refreshments.

### Saturday, February 15

10:00 AM - Noon

#### **HSNM Topical Discussion**

*Can Local Newspapers Be Saved?*

Special Collections Library

423 Central Ave. NE

### Saturday, February 22

10:00 AM - Noon

#### **HSNM Speaker Meeting**

*"Creating Humanist Community: A Humanist Celebrant Thinks Out Loud"*

Marilee Harrison

Free and open to the public

Multi-purpose Room, NM Museum of Natural History and Science, 1801 Mountain Rd. NW

Humanist Minute: TBA

## Meetings by HSNM Affiliates

(Contact info is listed on the website. Please contact the groups directly.)

### Wednesday, February 12

7:00 to 9:00pm

#### **NMSR**

*History of the Astronomical Unit*

Barry Spletzer

Museum of Natural History and Science

[www.nmsr.org](http://www.nmsr.org)

### Tuesday, February 11

7:00 to 8:30pm

#### **First Unitarian HUumanist**

**Group**, 1st UU Church, Fellowship Hall

(505) 884-1801

### Saturday, February 22

1:00pm

Freedom from Religion, Local Chapter

See <http://www.meetup.com/FFRABQ/> for meeting details

#### **Roswatheists**

Roswatheists meets every other Saturday. To find out more please visit <http://www.meetup.com/Roswatheists>

## **President's Message for February 2014**

by Zelda Gatuskin

Here is something rather simple that I especially treasure about our humanist community: I feel that in your company I can be myself and say what I think, and I can trust you to do the same. Honesty and trust - it doesn't get much better than that.

When humanists converse among ourselves, our ideas may be accepted, rejected or corrected, but our responses to each other do not come as a judgment from on high or filtered through a set of entrenched expectations. We connect to each other directly. The language we speak is grounded in the everyday and the evident - documented history, verifiable facts, knowledge of natural processes, and the empathy of one confused, imperfect mortal for another.

One need not repeat a series of secret knocks to be admitted to the humanist circle. Arcane initiations are not required. No baptisms, catechisms or professions of allegiance - please! Our values and ethics spring from our awareness that

## The Humanist Society of New Mexico

A Chapter of the American Humanist Association  
Member of The New Mexico Coalition of Reason

The purpose of HSNM is to promote ethical, naturalistic, democratic Humanism among its members and within its community.

### Officers/Committees

Zelda Gatuskin: President  
Randall Wall: Vice President/Speaker Programs  
Leland Franks: Past President  
Richard Grady: Treasurer  
Jerry Gilbert: Secretary/Membership  
Ashley Jordan: Member-at-Large, Newsletter Editor

Subscription to HSNM Newsletter, published monthly, accompanies HSNM membership or can be obtained by nonmembers for \$20 annually, HSNM membership is \$20/year (\$30 for two adults in the same household. Send subscription or membership request to: Humanist Society of New Mexico, P.O. Box 27293, Albuquerque, NM 87125-7293. Send Newsletter submissions to: Editor, Ashley Jordan, AshleyNJordan@GMX.com or to Humanist Society of New Mexico, P.O. Box 27293, Albuquerque, NM 87125-7293. The deadline for Newsletter submissions is the third Friday of each month. Website submissions may be sent to [president@humanistsocietyofnm.org](mailto:president@humanistsocietyofnm.org). HSNM dues are now paid separately from AHA dues, visit [www.americanhumanist.org](http://www.americanhumanist.org) for more information about the American Humanist Association.

Humanism is an ethical philosophy that derives its principles from science and reason rather than theology. It asserts the worth and dignity of every person, advocates personal liberty tempered by social and environmental responsibility, and promotes democracy, compassion, and justice. It sees human beings as natural organisms, whose values arise from culture and experience and holds humanity responsible for its own affairs.

humans, however varied, are more alike than different, and that humanity is inextricably connected to nature. Our shared belief, grounded in experience, is that some things are knowable, and human knowledge serves humanity and the planet better than human ignorance.

Humanist philosophy asserts that people have a natural inclination to fairness and morality. Without the promise of heaven or the threat of hell, we will still strive to behave ethically. Examples of this abound in our humanist communities, where our good works are motivated by sincere respect and regard for each other. In my humanist dream, everyone has a chance to fulfill their own unique potential, so that we may attain a sustainable and peaceful society through embracing diversity and fostering creativity.

Certainly the higher ideals of humankind have not so far been achieved through authoritarian insistence on conformity to an imposed order. To the contrary, attempts to constrain the human imagination and redirect communal energy by brute or psychological force only breed frustration, strife and resistance. All too often, those who are vested with “spiritual” authority are actually engaged in reining in the vitality of the human spirit.

What I have observed of religious belief, practice, and community is that there is always a point at which one is asked to repress one’s own (choose all that apply): instincts, individuality, opinion, questions, knowledge, direct experience, desire. Apparently piety can only be measured in terms of the difficulty of overcoming a natural or automatic inclination. Thus we are presented with a series of tests in which the object of the game is actually to be *not* oneself but a magically better being for having suppressed personal perspective and submitted to the group myth. Attempts to draw back the curtain, assertive skepticism, any perceived subversion of traditional practice are threatening and unwelcome. In other words, “faking it” is rewarded, or at least smoothes the way, whereas honesty becomes problematic.

I did not realize, until I had spent some time in the humanist community, how often I censored myself, even in conversation with good friends. Smile and nod, smile and nod... I’d never dare to challenge someone’s taste, and certainly not their beliefs. But why should I not express my own? Thanks to our freethought community, I do express my thoughts more freely. It’s not so much a matter of being more courageous as simply being more

in practice.

It is important to have an intellectual home, a setting in which to fully and freely exercise our minds. Our humanist societies have had no trouble filling this need. But humanism encompasses every aspect of human existence, and our organizations face many challenges when it comes to addressing the emotional and practical needs of our members. The question arises: Can we provide a home for the heart as well? Please join us for an extended February Speaker Meeting on building humanist community.

### **February Speaker Meeting**

Marilee Harrison, Humanist Celebrant: "Creating Humanist Community: A Humanist Celebrant Thinks Out Loud"

*(This meeting will be held in the Multi-purpose Room, of NM Museum of Natural History and Science; use the main entrance, then turn left before getting to the admissions desk. The presentation will be followed by a lunch meeting with Marilee in the same location; for HSNM members only; see below for more info.)*

Marilee Harrison lives in Santa Fe, NM. With an educational background in psychology and clinical social work, she is retired from a career in psychotherapy, specializing in trauma and abuse issues. Now a humanist, her emergence from a fundamentalist religious background and clinical trauma experience augment her understanding of the harm inflicted on the vulnerable through the misuse of religion. She maintains an abiding commitment to social justice and equality, particularly as they affect women and minority groups. These humanist values provide the underpinning for Marilee's efforts to provide services and build a sense of community for secular individuals.

"Creating Humanist Community: A Humanist Celebrant Thinks Out Loud"

The idea of humanist communities is not new. Can we breathe new life into the concept, building on foundations laid while opening doors to new people and approaches? What can we learn from other movements and the growing numbers of the nonreligious? How can we position ourselves to offer services and support as needs arise in the secular community? When do we collaborate with, and when do we distinguish ourselves

from liberal religious traditions, as we live out our distinctive humanist ideals?

### **"Taking Care of Our HSNM Community" a discussion moderated by Marilee Harrison**

February 22, 2014, 12:15 - 1:30 PM - Brown-bag Lunch Meeting. Multi-purpose Room, of NM Museum of Natural History and Science.

The idea of a Member Services or Member Care committee has been brought up repeatedly, but we've never been able to get something off the ground. Let's get together and talk about how HSNM might begin to recognize the life events and needs of our individual members. We have built a humanist organization, but have we built a humanist community? Open to HSNM members; please bring your own lunch and/or something to share.

### **Darwin Day Events Planned**

By Jerry Wesner

Charles Darwin's hypothesis of species change by undirected evolution is one of the great ideas of the past few centuries. Darwin was not the only scientist to reach this conclusion, or perhaps even the first. But he organized the data in a way nobody else had done. On Sunday, February 9, the New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science, 1801 Mountain Rd. N.W., will recognize and interpret this idea with various exhibits and presentations designed for museum attendees of all ages and levels of knowledge. The presentations begin at 10 and run, off and on, until 4; most exhibits will be open for the entire time; all with regular Museum admission. What a great way to spend a Sunday with family and friends -- having fun and learning together.

Then, on the following Wednesday, Feb. 12 -- Darwin's actual birthday -- the regular 7:00 p.m. meeting at the Museum of New Mexicans for Science and Reason will focus on Darwin and his theory for adults and young adults with some interest in, and knowledge of, science. This is open to the public; all are invited. The full schedules will be on the Museum's website: [www.NMnatural-history.org](http://www.NMnatural-history.org)

**What:** Darwin Days Kick-off

**When:** Sunday, Feb 9, 2014, 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM

**Where:** NM Museum of Natural History & Science  
1801 Mountain Road NW, Albuquerque

**Cost:** Darwin Days Lecture Program free to the public;

Children's Activities & Museum displays accessible with museum admission.

## **HSNM Nuts and Bolts**

Governing Board News: Our longtime Newsletter Editor and Member-at-Large, Randy Wall, has stepped up to fill the HSNM Vice President position through the remainder of this term (which ends October 31, 2014), and Member-at-Large Ashley Jordan has stepped up to fill in as Newsletter Editor for him. This means there will be some changes in newsletter submission guidelines. Submissions are now due on the third Friday of each month, instead of the third Saturday, and should be sent to AshleyNJordan@GMX.com. Written submissions should be directed to the HSNM P.O. Box.

There are now several Member-at-Large positions to fill. Please consider volunteering to serve on the board. This is a good opportunity to test drive a leadership position with HSNM. The GB meets every other month or so, following one of our regularly scheduled meetings. The next meeting will be held after our Informal Meeting on February 8th. To be considered for a position, contact Zelda. All HSNM members are welcome to sit in on Governing Board meetings.

## **Financial Overview**

A small group of current and past Governing Board members met on January 18 to review the status of our accounts, and projected income and expenditures, with HSNM Treasurer Richard Grady. There is currently \$4,060 in our general operating fund. Our recurring annual expenses are estimated to be \$2,500, so we look to be in pretty good shape for this year. However, it was noted that of the \$3,810 we took in last year, almost half came in through additional donations. Dues alone do not cover our annual operating expenses. Thanks to our members' generosity, we were able to keep our dues low, and we hope to continue to do so. However, this policy does keep us in a little suspense as to how much will come in from year to year.

Watch this space for more discussion of how to bolster our resources, and use them. In addition to our general fund, we have a scholarship fund which was seeded with a starting donation of \$5,000. We have issued two \$1,000 scholarships through UNM and currently have \$3,220 in the fund.

## **Getting to Know the Peace Center**

Our first Informal Meeting at the Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice (corner of Harvard and Silver) was well attended, and it went pretty well once we got settled in. The Peace Center is a hub for all kinds of groups and activities. One of these activities we can support wholeheartedly is the food distribution that takes place in the parking lot every Saturday morning between 9 and 10 AM. However.... did you notice I said parking lot? While we did find plenty of street parking, we'll have an easier time of it if we start our meeting a little later. We are going to try starting at 10:15 and going until 12:15. If we can have a set-up crew from 10-10:15 and a clean-up crew from 12:15 to 12:30, we will maximize the time we have to really sit and talk. Please come early or stay late to help out if you can; and if you need a parking space near the Center, arrive at about 10:10 and hopefully the lot and more nearby spaces will be available.

## **HSNM Joins the All Families Matter Coalition**

At the last HSNM board meeting, the board voted to join the All Families Matter Coalition, a coalition of organizations collectively representing tens of thousands of New Mexicans that are committed to furthering equality for the diversity of LGBT families by supporting the public education efforts of the Why Marriage Matters New Mexico Campaign. The recent ruling by the Supreme Court that determined same sex marriage constitutional has made the coalition shift gears, and they are now in the process of putting together an amendment to the state constitution to protect that right from any further onslaughts.

Ashley Jordan will be acting as representative of HSNM to the coalition. If anyone else would like to attend meetings or get involved, please email her at AshleyN-Jordan@GMX.com to find out what you can do to help.

Please keep an eye out in future newsletters for coalition events and announcements, including a possible Speaker Meeting from the coalition's Executive Director, Havens Levitt.

## **Jay Lee Evans Really Was the Most Interesting Man in the World**

By Zelda Gatuskin

Our dear friend and devoted member Jay Lee Evans

died suddenly on January 9. A committed local activist, dedicated public servant, naturalist, musician, circus performer and scholar, Jay Lee touched the lives of possibly everyone in Albuquerque in one way or another. His memorial on January 16th was lovingly orchestrated by his colleagues from the City's Open Space Division at their West Side Visitor Center overlooking fields and bosque. Former Mayor Martin Chavez gave the eulogy, and then family and friends shared their thoughts. The variety of stories told about Jay and the talents described seem impossible to have all belonged to one person. Afterwards, when I tried to reconstruct what I had heard, I realized that our own Jay Lee Evans really was the most interesting man in the world. I will never forget Jay Lee, and I will never forget the sunny January day that such a large and diverse crowd came out to express their admiration for him. HSNM was well represented, and I said a few words on all of our behalf. When I spoke to Marty Chavez briefly afterwards, he told me that Jay Lee "loved you guys."

### **Remembering Jay Lee Evans**

By Ron Herman

Hi, Folks,

The "service" or celebration for Jay last Thursday was very inspiring for me. Not only did it highlight the life of an extraordinary person, but it demonstrated how friends and family can create a fitting memorial without religion and without a member of the clergy leading the "flock."

It was held on the patio of the Open Spaces Center off Coors NW overlooking the Bosque with all its natural scenes, a place that Jay helped preserve in his position in City government. That site provides a view of the rock faces of the Sandia Mountains where Jay climbed and taught others the skills and enjoyment of that athletic adventure. While there were occasional references to Jay being "out there" or up there with a flock of birds, there was hardly a mention of a god. The talk was all about the Jay's character and how he chose to live his life.

The service was led by Jay's best friend, former Mayor Martin Chavez. They grew up together near Magdalena, and Marty was casual and friendly in sharing his memories and feelings about our loss. I only met Jay in his later years and did not know him very well. So, I was surprised to see the old pictures of him as a skinny red-

headed cowboy on a ranch fence or twirling a lariat on horseback. I didn't know that he had four years of college, but before graduating he ran off to join the circus as a tent and animal hand and performer. He toured the country for several years and became well-known in that industry. He learned to juggle every object conceivable, including bowling balls, sharp objects, and flaming torches. He taught himself to play several musical instruments, reading books about them and anything else that caught his interest, including calligraphy and astronomy.

Jay supported Citizens Against Radioactive Dumping for many years on their Board and committees, including the organizer of street theater as a way to get attention and dramatize the cause. (You may remember that Harry Willson shared those interests, as well.) Marty and others described how much Jay was appreciated in his job with the City, beginning with the mayor's first administration. Politically, Jay was to the left of the Democratic Party, but Marty persuaded him to use his fervor for protecting the environment to help in key positions with City parks and open spaces.

Friends, family, and co-workers spoke about Jay and their time with him. The attendance was close to 200 by my rough count, an eclectic mix for sure. More than anything, Jay is remembered for giving his time to others - entertaining children and older kids, too, teaching, serving, and simply enjoying life. Injuries to his knees slowed him down over the years, and finally cancer got the best of him.

This gathering reminded me how important each of us is in our own way to everyone else, and how we have opportunities every day to participate in the wonderment of our surroundings and the life it holds.

### **Majority Privilege**

By Jerry Gilbert

In the last newsletter, Ashley Jordan wrote a very important article. The concept of privilege has been written about, but it is rare for the topic to be applied to gender issues. Although I had never heard of the term cis-gendered or cis-anything, the fact that people who don't fit the norm are often considered inferior or abnormal, should be quite obvious to everyone. Barriers have been broken, or at least dented, in areas of race (a term that anthropologists now reject and should be re-

jected), ethnicity, national origin, sex (male vs. female), and others. While people should still work at breaking those barriers, the area of gender identity has received too little attention and therefore too little action.

While I don't consider someone a bad person for exercising gender privilege (i.e. believed superiority), discrimination against those with gender identity disconnects is bad & unacceptable behavior, and it stems from the belief that some people are naturally superior to others as persons, and therefore they are entitled to superior benefits. I agree with Ashley that such rejection and discrimination must be fought. First, people, especially we humanists, need to make the general population aware of those with such disconnects and try to convey what it is like. Second, as Ashley emphasized, make the effort to "make sure that others listen to the source," as well as to encourage those who are the source to speak up and speak out.

I am male and caucasian (I dislike referring to people by skin color as if that captured them as persons), but I take no pride in these genetic features, and I don't consider myself to be a "typical male" or a "typical caucasian" (my computer spell-check insists that caucasian should be capitalized, but I taught it to accept my spelling). I don't like the fact that I am ever considered superior because I am male or caucasian. With Ashley's encouragement, I will do more to inform the community of their need to change their views and behavior toward those who are not cis-gendered.

Another article in the last Newsletter informed us of the 2013 Freedom of thought Report which included discrimination against atheists. Here, as in regard to discrimination against those who are not cis-gendered, we are faced with the reality of privilege. For the most part I am talking about "christian privilege" (same spell-check argument over christian). I'm sure that every one of you has experienced or witnessed christians who believe that they are naturally superior to all non-christians simply because they have convinced themselves that they have been ordained by a deity to be superior. And these same people may regularly attend their churches and give lip service to helping the downtrodden.

Being a christian or a member of any faith is a choice, not a biological fact. So, any believer is choosing to be different from other believers or non-believers. This choice does not automatically include the idea of be-

ing superior. Not all religious people consider themselves superior; however, it is likely that they do little or nothing to dispel the notion.

While virtually every American claims to be proud to be an American and to live in a democracy, the widely held belief that some people are inherently superior to others contradicts the founding principles of America and democracy. We must continue to inform, and to fight against these harmful beliefs & actions.

### **Time's Immortalities Mirth Eternities**

by Jean O'Hara

In any large city there is big graft;  
How about the museums for a draft?  
What about a constitution, where's one?  
Or, is it no fruition, where is there some?  
Is that what you do, make people to hurt,  
To experiment on them to tell them, "They're dirt?"  
Just because one does not like that fragment,  
The reason being, one wants the paper sent  
To a beautiful building, museum  
Or not. It's not honorable to mean  
That life. What flowers must be put to death  
Before the tiny pose doth breathe the breath  
That islands are not all connected to  
Puerto Rico, the Haitians to eschew?