



THE

HUMANIST SOCIETY

OF NEW MEXICO

NEWSLETTER

August 2018

A Chapter of the American Humanist Association

hs-nm.org

president@humanistsocietyofnm.org

www.meetup.com/group-HSNM/

HSNM Meetings in Albuquerque

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

Saturday, August 11

HSNM Informal Meeting 10am to Noon
Special Collections Library 423 Central Ave. NE

Saturday, August 18

HSNM Topical Discussion 10am – Noon
Special Collections Library 423 Central Ave. NE
Reclaiming Democracy

Saturday, August 25

HSNM Speaker Meeting 10am – Noon
No Speaker for this Month – Note new location
Please join us for a Humanist Coffee Klatch
at the Standard Diner, 320 Central Ave. SE

Meetings by HSNM Affiliates are held throughout the month.
For more information please visit their websites.

Albuquerque Skeptics
(www.meetup.com/ABQSkeptics)

Freedom From Religion, Albuquerque
(www.meetup.com/FFRABQ)

New Mexicans for Science and Reason (www.nmsr.org)

Roswatheists (<http://www.meetup.com/Roswatheists>)

Santa Fe Atheist Community
(<http://www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Atheist-Community>)

President's Message

by Randall Wall

First of all, I'd like to thank Allen Robnett for his fascinating presentation on the science of Astronomy! His presentation was interesting and informative and he only had a month to throw it altogether! I'm very appreciative to have him as a speaker, as well as a member of HSNM!

About our next speaker meeting. Due to the Special Collections Library having other plans in August, we're left without a place to hold our speaker meeting. So we've decided to do something a little different, and journey one block west across the street to the Standard Diner and hold a Humanist Coffee Klatch. HSNM will pick up the bill for any beverages, so please stop by, have a beverage, stay and share a little. It should be fun!

HSNM Board Meeting

I'd like to hold this quarter's HSNM Board Meeting. All HSNM members are invited to attend.

When: August 25, 12 noon (following the Humanist Coffee Klatch)

Where: Standard Diner, 320 Central Ave. SE

The Humanist Society of New Mexico

A Nonprofit Corporation

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.

Officer/Committees

Randall Wall: President

David Stelle: Vice President/Speaker Programs

Cynthianne Yabut: Secretary

Richard Grady: Treasurer

Cheryl Gatner: Member-at-Large

Jeanette Smith: Member-at-Large

A subscription to the 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). Youth/student membership (24 years or under) is \$5.00 per year.

Send subscription or membership requests to: Humanist Society of New Mexico, P.O. Box 27293, Albuquerque, NM 87125-7293.

To join or renew membership on line, go to the website at <http://humanistic/join.html>.

HSNM dues are now paid separately from AHA dues. Visit www.americanhumanist.org for more information about the American Humanist Association.

Send Newsletter submissions to: Editor, Randall Wall, Paragon2012@comcast.net. Send Website submissions to president@humanistsocietyofnm.org. The deadline for Newsletter submissions is the third Friday of each month.

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.

My New Book Is Inspired By You

by Zelda Gatuskin

I'm pleased to announce the release of my collected essays 2010-2016: *If I Could Convince You of Only One Thing* in paperback and e-book editions. As some of you may recall, from 2010 to 2014 I served as president of HSNM. A selection of my monthly "President's Message" essays from this very Newsletter are included in the book alongside essays from my blog "The Tree" (2012-2016), which was inspired by my work for the AHA's Feminist Caucus (now the Feminist-Humanist Alliance).

The collection is introduced with a talk I gave at the 2010 AHA Conference, "Art and Religion and Science and Reason," thanks to the efforts of this group. I had given a version of that presentation at one of our HSNM Speaker Meetings in the fall of 2009. Our HSNM president at the time, Fred March, urged me to send a proposal for the national conference, and when it was accepted, he found a sponsor for my trip, and somehow AHA and HSNM got me out to San Jose.

For the conclusion to the collection, I have written a new essay, "A Philosophy for Everyone." And I included the complete text of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as an Appendix.

Book details and excerpts can be found at the Amador Publishers website, www.amadorbooks.com. To purchase print copies of the book from me for \$15/each, please send an email to zelda@amadorbooks.com or call me at 505-344-6102 to place your order, or use the following order form:

<http://www.amadorbooks.com/orderform-ifi-special.pdf>.

The book will also be available at Amazon and all the usual online places, and here in Albuquerque at Treasure House Books in Old Town, where I will have a book signing on September 30 from 1 to 3 pm.

Humanist Environmentalism

by Roy Speckhardt, Executive Director, American Humanist Association

(Continued from July newsletter)

When we think of Star Trek, or the recent real life discovery of another 8 planet star system in our galaxy, I think we can more easily see that things can have value beyond what we humans designate. As Bill Nye reminds us of our humility and minor role in the universe, saying, "We are just a speck, on a speck, orbiting a speck, in the corner of a speck, in the middle of specklessness." Our great universe surely contains other valued entities, some of which are likely more advanced than we are. To value something, you just need the capacity to recognize and appreciate that value. Even here on earth we have other species (like the apes) that value their families and communities.

Many folks I've chatted with in recent years fit the humanist definition, but are wary of identifying with our philosophy by name since they worry it implies (to them) a disregard for non-human animals. It'd be helpful to our movement, I think, if we could articulate a broader statement so animal rights humanists would be attracted to our cause.

While humans may be the most intelligent life on the planet, other animals are quite intelligent as well, and are sometimes better community members than we are. In some ways humans are possibly the biggest blight on the planet, killing off species, nearly eliminating life from some geographies, and accelerating climate change. But certainly that doesn't mean we should be eradicating ourselves when we know we can do better. We are smart enough, and capable enough to improve the quality of life on this planet, not just for ourselves, but for other life as well. So I think that should be a goal of ours.

We can start by ethically reducing our future numbers over time. And we can and should do our part to make things better instead of worse.

During my first solo camping trip, I was hiking alone along the Appalachian Trail in the middle of Virginia. As I reached the top of a ridge, I stepped out of the canopy of trees making their fractal pattern overhead. I entered a meadow where the sun shone clearly on wildflowers, berry bushes and an array of life. Looking up, I saw a family of bald eagles flying silently just above me. The serenity of my surroundings and the majesty of the eagles filled me with a sense of awe and wonder and recalling it, I am reminded that peak experiences need not rely on transcending reality. I'm always thrilled at finding nearly untouched spaces and exploring the life that thrives on our planet. But unfortunately it seems more and more that such places are hard to find.

Certainly, humanity benefited over the past century from technological innovations and societal changes that have allowed us to reduce infant mortality and live longer, healthier lives than ever before. But this is not without its consequences, as the planet and governments around the world struggle to deal with a rapidly growing global population.

Rampant pollution, food shortages, and conflict over increasingly scarce resources rise unabated. Our planet's ecosystem is hardly infinite in its resources to supply us what we need to sustain life or withstand our heedless actions that continue to degrade it. In fact, according to the World Wildlife Fund, humankind is already overusing the renewable resource capacity of Earth's biosphere by 50 percent. As more of our children survive infancy, (something that wasn't always expected less than a century ago), they develop into adults who drive vehicles, eat livestock and crops, and often have large families of their own due to their faith, or a lack of family planning resources. This is causing our planet to suffer. And we're finding that things like food, jobs, and education aren't guaranteed.

As climate change and other environmental issues gain attention across the country and around the globe, it's worth remembering the words within *Humanism and Its Aspirations* (the Third

and most current Humanist Manifesto) that remind us of our “planetary duty to protect nature’s integrity, diversity, and beauty in a secure, sustainable manner.” The humanist commitment to the environment didn’t start with that statement either— it was prominent in the preceding document from decades earlier, which read: “In learning to apply the scientific method to nature and human life, we have opened the door to ecological damage, over-population, dehumanizing institutions, totalitarian repression, and nuclear and biochemical disaster. Faced with apocalyptic prophecies and doomsday scenarios, many flee in despair from reason and embrace irrational cults and theologies of withdrawal and retreat.”

Today, humanist environmentalists David Suzuki, Silvia Earle and Lester R. Brown, along with allies like Al Gore and Jane Goodall, are confronting these challenges instead of fleeing from them.

This is why it’s so important to support the efforts of governments and private organizations that seek to promote family planning and help people to cooperatively decide to reduce population growth and live sustainable lifestyles. Programs that educate us about food waste, or distribute contraception, help combat environmental degradation, which is absolutely crucial if our children and grandchildren are to live in a world that can sustain them. The United Nations recognized this need for action in a recent report, which stated the now obvious: “We must act now to halt the alarming pace of climate change and environmental degradation, which pose unprecedented threats to humanity.”

Humanists hold a strong conviction that every human being is born with inherent dignity and the right to a life free from unnecessary pain and suffering. That sense of humanitarianism, combined with humanism’s emphasis on scientifically accurate information and the role technology can play in improving our quality of life, leads to a powerful support for family planning, living within our means, and other efforts meant to address the problems we face today.

Contraception is the key aspect of family planning, vital in poorer countries since families there often struggle to feed, clothe, and shelter their children. Education must play a central role in these programs to ensure their overall effectiveness, and there’s a special need to educate young girls and women. Several studies correlate such education with decreasing unwanted pregnancies as well as decreasing the frequency and severity of poverty.

While some traditional religious groups refuse to participate in comprehensive family planning efforts and claim that the distribution of contraceptives is immoral, or even evil, humanists see it as a means by which individuals can gain autonomy over their bodies, better plan for their future, and lead happier lives. Unlike fundamentalists and the faith-based organizations they support, humanists don’t rely on a god to fix things, don’t rely on an afterlife to improve our lot, and don’t have archaic prohibitions about contraception, abortion, or other means of providing family planning options. That’s why population dynamics matter so much to humanists—we humans have the ability and the responsibility to protect our planet.

Thankfully, some traditionally religious folks also appreciate the need to act as good stewards of what they see as creation. It’s a good thing they feel this way, or we wouldn’t have the critical mass to effect necessary change. The AHA’s Humanist of the Year, E. O. Wilson, was on the right track when he wrote *The Creation: An Appeal to Save the Earth*, which calls for scientists, religious leaders, and other individuals to set aside their differences to save the environment. Only together can we address the challenges before us and support a framework that will allow generations to come to live and thrive.

At the end of the day, these population dynamics and their consequences impact everyone. But humanists are natural leaders in the effort because we understand that this is the only life we have, and this planet is the only place we have to live it.

(To be continued next issue)