



THE HUMANIST SOCIETY OF NEW MEXICO

NEWSLETTER

January 2019

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, January 12

HSNM Informal Meeting 10am to Noon
Free Range Event Center, 1710 Central Ave. SE
(Note new meeting place)

Saturday, January 19

HSNM Topical Discussion 10am – Noon
Free Range Event Center, 1710 Central Ave. SE
(Note new meeting place)

Topic: HSNM Mission Statement

Saturday, January 26

HSNM Speaker Meeting 10am – Noon
Special Collections Library 423 Central Ave. NE
A Journey of a Small Town Internist in the Indian Health Service
by Dr. Terrance Sloan

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

Note new meeting place 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 Allen Robnett

Let it snow, Let it snow, Let it snow!
Happy HumanLight, everyone!

Not everyone would welcome snow, and I was surprised and dismayed to discover that there are humanists who are very much against the idea of celebrating HumanLight; Tom Flynn is a prime example. In his blog article titled "What's Wrong With HumanLight," Tom cited 6 reasons that Humanists should not observe Humanlight. Basically, his notion is that the winter solstice celebration has deep religious roots, has no scientific basis, limits its target group to the northern hemisphere, and can be mistaken for celebrating Christmas.

My reaction is two-fold. First, I think it is a terrible idea to let fear of what religious believers might think determine our course of action. But more importantly, there are celebrations (like birthdays) that have no real scientific background, but that humans everywhere enjoy. The solstice event is another example; it marks, for those 90% of the human population who live north of the equator, the end of daylight growing shorter and colder, and the wonderful thought of "Welcome Sweet Springtime."

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

Allen Robnett: President

Charlene Baker: Vice President/Speaker Programs

Cynthianne Yabut: Secretary

Richard Grady: Treasurer

David Stelle: Member-at-Large

Teri Sloan: Member-at-Large

Randall Wall: Past President/Newsletter Editor

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.

On a more serious note, it is a mistake to think that any group is all of the same mind. The splintering of "non-believers" into so many factions is an unfortunate consequence of the extent of the broad spectrum of opinions. The best we can do is get together with those whose differences are not so great as to prevent civil dialogue and rational discussion. In this season of HumanLight, I am glad that we have such a group of delightful friends. The season is an ideal reminder to reflect on friends and relations, past and present, and to express our feelings to them. This is not a religious exercise; it is a deeply human one.

The HSNM Human Light potluck party will be at 9724 Loretta Drive (just west of the Alameda bridge) on Saturday, December 29, starting at 2 pm to accommodate those who don't like to drive after dark. The twelve foot high plastic steer at the end of Loretta looks right down the driveway.

Please RSVP to Charlene (Hufrot@gmail.com), so that she can coordinate food, seating, etc.

January Speaker Meeting

Dr Sloan will present various clinical cases to illustrate an understanding of Health Care for Native Americans and also demonstrate (in his opinion) some of the challenges facing tribal nations.

Speaker Bio

Our speaker on January 26 will be Terrance W. Sloan, MD, known to us as Terry. He is the retired Chief of Staff of the Gallup Indian Medical Center in Gallup, NM. During his practice, he also served with the Aberdeen Area Indian Health Service in South Dakota and with the Albuquerque Indian Health Service. His specialty is internal medicine, but in his 45-year medical career he has served in lead administrative duties, practiced emergency medicine, taught medical students, served as member and

chairman of local and national councils relating to community health and particularly Indian community welfare, and testified before Congress on issues relating to Hunger, Rural Health Care, and Indian Health Service.

He is the recipient of numerous awards and commendations, including the US Public Health Service Citation Award and Commissioned Officer Award, State of South Dakota Humanitarian of the Year Award, and the Proclamation of 'Terrance W. Sloan Day' by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe in South Dakota.

Although he lives in Gallup, Terry comes to Albuquerque frequently to attend HSNM meetings and plays and concerts. He was recently elected as member-at-large to the HSNM Board.

Report on the Informal Meeting

by Allen Robnett

The HSNM meeting on December 8, 2018 was our "What's on Your Mind" meeting. Seventeen people attended and we were happy to welcome three newcomers, Eve, Steve and Tom. Given that several of our regulars were absent, this number accentuates the urgency that we find a desirable replacement for our 15-capacity meeting room at the Special Collections Library.

Christmas was the first topic brought up. Strong objection was expressed to the prayers that were made part of the public Plaza Don Luis tree lighting ceremony. Later, the idea was floated of rejuvenating the "HumanLight" celebration on December 23. It is not an attempt to subvert the traditional Christmas event, but to introduce a solstice celebration for the humanist community. The event is designed to celebrate the "positive human values of reason, compassion, humanity and hope." The name HumanLight comes from a non-supernatural emphasis on humanity with "Light" pointing to human reason. The tradition was begun in eastern U.S. in 2001. The group was reminded that our fifth Saturday get-together on December 29 will be held as a Holiday party at Charlene and Allen's house, 9724 Loretta Drive, NW. Be sure to come and bring your ideas regarding HumanLight.

It should come as no surprise that the long-standing sexual abuse of women would be a major focus for several of our members, men as well as

women. The view of what is normal and acceptable is definitely changing. It is difficult to separate the claims of all-to-frequent inappropriate touching from the occasional super-sensitive claims of abuse. It was mentioned that even standard language tends to shape young girls' views of themselves negatively, as in the tendency to say "he, him, his" in place of "he or she, him or her, his or her". It is now widely accepted that "they, them, their" can be used as a genderless singular pronoun.

The humanist perspective of mankind was reflected in mention of the slogan, "Immigrants make America great again, again", in the observation that several of the great band leaders of the 20th century refused to play for segregated audiences, and in the revelation that the twentieth century yielded a "Green Book" that informed blacks of locations that were safe to eat and sleep while traveling.

It was pointed out that, though George H W Bush represented a kinder, gentler kind of Republican, it was more than a year into his presidency that he finally initiated government action to quell the AIDS epidemic that took half-a-million lives. It was also pointed out that he answered reporter Rob Sherman's question about atheists by saying, "I don't know that atheists should be regarded as citizens, nor should they be regarded as patriotic. This is one nation under God."

While there is no independent corroboration of this assertion, the White House never denied it and ignored requests for clarification.

Finally, it was observed that nationalism is not the same as patriotism.

Report on Topical Discussion Meeting- Fostering Community Without Religion

By Allen Robnett

December 15, 2018: Thirteen people attended, including two of our newest. All were invited to visit the proposed replacement meeting place, Free Range Event Center, on Central at University, immediately after the meeting.

It quickly developed that we needed to define the kind of community to be fostered, and to be aware of the two faces of community (extended family vs tribalism, inclusive but also exclusive).

To some the idea of emulating the extended family achieved by religions was repugnant, simply because of the association with religious intents. It was agreed that the desirable aspects of community included shared common goals and activities, doing things together. Most find in their chosen community a sense of security, caring and help in time of need. One problem with respect to adolescence is the tendency to join the first group in which they find acceptance.

It was suggested that tight-knit communities are formed through sharing altered states of consciousness (dancing, singing, meditation and, yes, pot smoking). There was immediately both strong objection and strong endorsement of notion of sharing altered states of consciousness as an important aspect of community. But it was acknowledged that there is immediate acceptance in specific groups (musical band, singing groups, dance groups, church, humanists). It was mentioned people who have studied Esperanto find immediate acceptance world-wide in the Esperanto community. It was observed that the degree of "family-ness" is not the same across all religious groups; churches known for intellectualism (such as Unitarians) tend not to be durably welcoming.

The idea of global citizenship was brought up. To some it would involve renouncing one's natural citizenship. To others it is more of a philosophical outlook, underscoring concern for all humankind. (The president was roundly scolded for using the term "mankind").

It was obvious that there is a wide range of interests and goals in our group; some want activism, some want friendships, some want learning opportunities, feeling enriched. It is essential to avoid assuming that one shoe fits all, but also to recognize that it is impossible to please everyone. Some stressed that is irrational to think we can escape our primate background. Some object strongly to anything that has the mere appearance of copying religious approaches.

Several observations made do not fit directly into comments on community, but deserve recording for future consideration.

First, some whom we would identify as sadists identify themselves as moralists, punishing those who they see as deserving severe punishment.

Second, science is not an answer, it is a process.

Third, the view that humans are initially basically good versus the view of a complete spectrum, taking into account the effect of brain structure.

It was suggested that a good way to promote a sense of community within our group would be to reinstate the practice of small group dinners. It was also suggested that we generate and circulate a list of active members with email addresses, telephone numbers and enumeration of their specific talents, interests, and areas of expertise. These two suggestions will be implemented via a subsequent email. Obviously participation will be entirely optional.

A question was raised regarding our mission statement. Our newsletter carries with it the following statement:

"The purpose of HSNM is to promote ethical, naturalistic, democratic Humanism among its members and within its community." It was agreed that the topic for our January meeting would be a general consideration of this mission statement.

Celebration of the Christmas season is problematic for many humanists because of the religious associations. Of course the turning of the corner, signified by the solstice event, is an astronomical occasion having nothing to do with religion and has been celebrated by humans of the northern hemisphere since prehistoric times. Many humanist groups have adopted the idea of framing the seasonal celebration in terms of the HumanLight, instituted in 2001. It seemed like a good idea to us, so we created a song for the occasion, and called it *Ode to HumanLight*, to be sung to the melody of Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*.

After we adjourned, nine or ten of our group met at the *Free Range Event Center* on Central near University. All enthusiastically agreed that it is virtually ideal for our needs.

Our informal meeting on January 12, and the topical discussion meeting on January 19 will be held there.