

Rationalists of East Tennessee Newsletter
June 2010 – submitted by Dave Buck

PROGENY SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

Dear RET Parents, Grandparents, & Members Interested in Children & Education:

Most of you are aware of the history of what was once called “the children’s program” at RET which, has in the past, been relatively vigorous since we had many members with small children. Over the past few years, we have lost many of those parent/members, and the number of children attending meetings with their parents has literally dried up, for many reasons. As the board struggled with “how to revive the children’s program,” the problems below were identified and discussed:

- * Children of various ages, all with abundant energy levels and minimum amounts of attention,
- * Providing some ethical/social educational component which has the approval of parents with differing philosophies,
- * Time differential between our adult program (two hours) and children's instruction (1/2 hour).

What to do with the children for that extra 1.5 hours?

- * Professional child care is a convenient yet risky and costly alternative,
- * Lack of RET's own space to store toys, books, blankets, supplies, etc. (which means trucking them in each time as we do with coffee, etc.).

When these issues have been discussed with parents of young children who have participated in the children's program, every one with whom I spoke agreed that these are serious problems and most indicated that we should probably abandon the attempt. Here are two quotes from parents:

"The parents of children often stay with their kids during the meeting which defeats the one purposes of the children's program: to allow parents to attend the meetings. In our opinion, RET just shouldn't bother with it."

"We wish there were an active children's program, but the typical RET meetings are just TOO long."

At a recent board meeting, it was suggested that the children's program, as RET has experienced it to date, could be converted into a Special Interest Group for parents and other interested adults. Knowing how busy lives of working parents are during the school year, it was proposed that they might like to schedule "child friendly" outings together during the summers, such as picnics, group swimming, boating, camping, group trips to the Smokey's or other entertainment venues, etc. This would give the children time for socialization and play with the parents near-by who could discuss current topics of interest in RET circles.

In order to introduce this idea to parents within the RET family, this email inquiry to all known parents (listed below) and the folks who indicated interest in Schools/Outreach, is hereby announcing the new Progeny SIG (as described above). We're also asking who would like to participate and who would be willing to lead/organize. Please email Schera@comcast.net if you are either...

- (a) interested in the activities of such a group and would try to **participate**, and/or
- (b) interested enough in such a group that you are willing to help **organize** it or **assist** with activities.

All we'd like back from you at this time, is the level of your interest in the idea of a new Progeny SIG. Thanks for giving this your consideration, and for responding to us as soon as you can.

RET JUNE / JUNE CALENDAR:

Sunday, June 6th – Roundtable

Topic: A legacy for the future

Time/location 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., Pellissippi State, Goins Bldg., Cafeteria Annex

Discussant: Eric Richter, the President of Digital Media Solutions and an RET member, Eric will talk about the importance of preserving your history and your family's history on video. The discussion will include a demonstration of how you, by yourself, can preserve your story for future generations.

Sunday, June 13th - Skeptic Book Club

Book: Whither Socialism? by Joseph Stiglitz

Time and location: 4:00 to 6:00pm, Barnes and Noble Booksellers, 8029 Kingston Pike.

“In this book, Joseph Stiglitz explains how the neoclassical, or Walrasian model (the formal articulation of Adam Smith's invisible hand), which has dominated economic thought over the past half century, may have wrongly encouraged the belief that market socialism could work. Stiglitz proposes an alternative model, based on the economics of information, that provides greater theoretical insight into the workings of a market economy and clearer guidance for the setting of policy in transitional economies. Stiglitz sees the critical failing in the standard neoclassical model underlying market socialism to be its assumptions concerning information, particularly its failure to consider the problems that arise from lack of perfect information and from the costs of acquiring information. He also identifies problems arising from its assumptions concerning completeness of markets, competitiveness of markets, and the absence of innovation. Stiglitz argues that not only did the existing paradigm fail to provide much guidance on the vital question of the choice of economic systems, the advice it did provide was often misleading.” The Wicksell Lectures

Sunday, June 20th - Roundtable

Topic: Allocation of Scarce Medical Resources: A Hands-On Exercise

Time/location: 10:30 - 12:30, Pellissippi State, Goins Bldg., Cafeteria Annex

Discussant: Dr. Glenn Graber, Professor of Philosophy at UTK

Dr. Graber will conduct an interactive session dealing with the allocation of scarce medical resources (what some call "rationing"). Remember the discussions of "death panels" and the like during the debates about health care reform? Dr. Graber maintains that some such choices are inevitable, and surveys a variety of ways in which we might ground the choices.

Sunday, June 27th – Reflections Group (potluck dinner)

Topic: TBD

Location: home of Schera Chadwick & Ted Lollis, 9219 George Williams Road, Knoxville 37922

Time: 4:00 to 6:00 pm. Call 865.690.8742 for detailed directions.