

Rationalists of East Tennessee Newsletter
November 2011 – edited by Ralph Isler

Announcements:

1. Mark the date! The largest secular movement gathering in world history will take place in Washington, D.C. on March 24th, 2012 from 10:00AM – 4:00PM at the Washington Mall. There will be music, comedy, speakers, and so much more. Visit ReasonRally.org for more information. We will plan carpooling for those who can attend.
2. The board is starting to consider speakers for our public meeting next year and would welcome suggestions from the membership.
3. Efforts are still underway to look for a permanent home for RET. At this point, we are still far short of finances needed to make a serious commitment. If you can see your way clear to making a special contribution earmarked for a building fund, it would be greatly appreciated.

Quote of the month: When I told the people of Northern Ireland that I was an atheist, a woman in the audience stood up and said, “Yes, but is it the God of the Catholics or the God of the Protestants in whom you don’t believe?”. – Quentin Crisp

RET November 2011 calendar:

Freethought Forum

Every Tuesday 5:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Community Channel of Knoxville – Comcast Channel 12

The free streaming live broadcast can be seen at <http://ctvknox.org/> for those who do not live in Knoxville. These discussions feature “Faithless” Forest Erickson, Larry Rhodes, and Joe Barnhart. They can usually be found on YOUTUBE within a day or so.

Sunday, November 6 – Presentation

Topic: “Our Microbial Friends”

Speaker: Professor Gladys Alexandre of the University of Tennessee will lead a discussion about the diversity and vital contributions of microorganisms to life on earth. When thinking about “bugs” or “germs” one is usually making reference to pathogenic microbes that can cause diseases. Although these are significant, they actually represent only a tiny fraction of all living microorganisms. As a group, these tiny life forms are fascinating because of their influence on all living things. Dr. Alexandre will introduce the positive side of microorganisms and provide examples to show that many assist in human functioning.

Time and location: 10:30 am – 12:30 pm, Pellissippi State Community College, Goins Bldg., Cafeteria Annex

Sunday, November 13 - Skeptic Book Club

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

Book: "The Humanist Approach to Happiness" by Jennifer Hancock. This book is easy to read and is useful for teenagers as well as adults. Many of us heard Jennifer talk about humanism recently at a meeting of the Rationalists of East Tennessee and also on a Freethought Forum. Discussion of Humanism does not need to be limited to Hancock's book. The websites below give information about humanism today and may provide topics for discussion.

International Humanism and Ethical Union <http://www.iheu.org/> Council for Secular Humanism <http://www.secularhumanism.org/index.php?section=main&page=affirmations> American Humanist Association <http://www.secularhumanism.org/>

Sunday, November 20, presentation

Topic: "It ain't necessarily so"

.Speaker: The Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament, describe the epic history of the Israelites and constitute much of the foundation on which Judaism and Christianity are based. But they are a mixture of fact, legend, and mythology, which are not easily distinguishable for the average reader. RET member Ralph Isler will address the questions of who wrote the Torah, why many stories are duplicated with different emphasis or even contradictions, and what modern archaeology reveals about the historicity of such events as the Exodus and the military conquest of Canaan.

Time and location: 10:30 am – 12:30 pm, Pellissippi State Community College, Goins Bldg., Cafeteria Annex

Sunday, November 27 – Reflections Group (potluck lunch)

Topic: How Do Non-Believers Celebrate "Holy-days"? [or Do They?]

How do free-thinkers celebrate the numerous religious holidays recognized by our federal government – exactly what, when, how and why do they celebrate? Most of us are overly familiar with Christian holidays and traditions, many of which have morphed into almost totally secular/commercialized, corrupted versions of their original purposes. Do we as non-believers just "go along to get along" and passively accept these religious remnants still being forced down society's throat? Or do we rebel, and refuse to be co-opted by others insincere observations? How do we spend this work-free time? Have we created traditions for our own families? Or do we take the time to travel abroad or visit relatives? We'll spend this meeting discussing the upcoming holy-day season: and how we chose to modify our participation or otherwise occupy ourselves at this busy time of year.

Time and Location: Join us for pot-luck lunch at Schera & Ted's home BEGINNING AT 1:00 pm. Address: 9219 George Williams Road, 37922; phone: [865.690.8742](tel:865.690.8742) for directions.