

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

Picnic: The annual regional picnic sponsored by the Western North Carolina Atheists was held on Saturday, September 17 at Lake Julian, NC. Seven RET members participated in this event along with three other groups. It would be quite gratifying to see a strong regional freethought movement develop over the next few years. Let's do what we can to make it happen.

Quote of the month: Live every day as if it were your last, because one of these days you will be right – Anonymous

Definition: Scriptures, n. The sacred books of our holy religion, as distinguished from the false and profane writings on which all other faiths are based. [Ambrose Bierce](#), *The Devil's Dictionary*

Cartoon sequence of the month:

<http://news.yahoo.com/photos/non-sequitur-slideshow/20110919-nq110919-gif-photo-050704370.html>

<http://news.yahoo.com/photos/non-sequitur-slideshow/20110922-nq110922-gif-photo-050551175.html>

<http://news.yahoo.com/photos/non-sequitur-slideshow/20110923-nq110923-gif-photo-050856079.html>

RET October 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.

The September 20th homage to his eminence, The Flying Spaghetti Monster, came off very well. Kudus to everyone who made it happen – particularly to Lee Erickson who conceived the idea for the show and who wrote most of the script in Pirateese.

Sunday, October 2 – Presentation.

Topic: “Money and Interest Groups in American Politics”.

.Speaker: Professor Anthony Nownes from the Department of Political Science at the University of Tennessee, will discuss whether money determines what our government does? What effect does “buying” elected officials have on important issues such as the environment or tax breaks for the wealthy? Do “special interest” groups dominate US politics at the expense of ordinary citizens, or are interest groups a positive manifestation of citizen involvement in government? Professor Nownes will discuss these timely questions as we enter a new round of campaigning for the 2012 elections.

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

Sunday, October 9 - Skeptic Book Club

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

Book: “The Grand Design” by Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow

When and how did the universe begin? Why are we here? Why is there something rather than nothing. What is the nature of reality? And finally, is the apparent “grand design” of our universe evidence of a creator who set things in motion – or does science offer another explanation? The authors tackle all these questions in the context of our current understanding of the basic structure of the physical world.

Sunday, October 16, presentation

Topic: "What would you have done?"

Speaker: RET member Michael Lance will discuss how ordinary Germans could have committed the Holocaust. Controlled experiments like the Stanford prison experiment and Milgram experiment on obedience provide us insight on how the mind reacts to authority figures.

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

Sunday, October 23 – Reflections Group (potluck lunch)

Topic: To be announced

Time and Location: To be announced

Is the fringe becoming the mainstream in politics?

In the recent debates of candidates for the Republican nomination for president in next year’s election, the candidates’ statements have been almost overshadowed by audience reaction:

1. Ron Paul was asked, “If a person slips into a coma, but has not purchased health insurance for this eventuality what should be done?” Someone from the audience respond “Let him die”. This statement was greeted with much applause.
2. Governor Rick Perry of Texas was pointed out as the official who had consigned more people to death than any other governor in history. This position also initiated a great round of applause from the audience.
3. On the other hand, governor Perry received a lot of boos for his policy of allowing “illegal” children, brought to Texas, through no fault of their own, to claim residency when entering Texas universities. Such status reduces tuition obligations by thousands of dollars and is a major factor in preparing students to contribute to the American economy.
4. In the Florida debate, a gay soldier was roundly booed when asking Rick Santorum whether he would try to reinstate “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”. Santorum basically said yes: “Sexual activity has no place in the military.” Amy Davidson at the New Yorker wrote “That will be a surprise to the men and women, of every orientation, who love, marry, and become parents while serving. We have an all-volunteer military whose health relies on its strong ties to civilian life — not a praetorian guard.” Santorum is a staunch Roman Catholic who never served in the military but took the time to father seven children.

And during a fund raising event, a religious fanatic, amid shouts that “Jesus is God!” , screamed that president Obama was the antichrist.