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RET News May 2016 CE



## Rationalists of East Tennessee Newsletter

May 2016

Jerry DeWitt - Annual Speaker - May 15

Be there! You won't want to miss it.

### First Sunday Meeting

**May 1 Sunday 10:30 - 12:30**

**Pellissippi State Community College, Goins Building, Cafeteria Annex**

#### **"No More Tomorrow, The Need for Conversation" by Judi Evans**

She will address suicide facts, teen suicide, senior depression and suicide, warning signs, and the need for discussion.

Judi has been a member of NAMI (The National Alliance on Mental Illness) for 20 years and has served at the Executive Director of NAMI Florida before relocating to East Tennessee. Judith is currently Vice President of NAMI Knoxville and is on the Board of Directors for NAMI Tennessee.

Judi has been involved in several community mental health partnerships including the Florida Mental Health Planning Council, Florida Partners in Crisis, the Supportive Housing Coalition, Florida Council for Community Mental Health, the Office of Suicide Prevention, The Florida Department of Children and Families System of Care Expansion Grant, and the Florida State Advisory Council for the Jail Diversion and Trauma Recovery Program for Veterans.

Judi is certified as a State and National Trainer for NAMI National Education Programs. She has been involved in implementing new and innovative mental health recovery programs to the community such as Compeer, Personal Outcome Measures and Self Directed Care, programs designed to enhance individual's self-determination and improve the ability of each participant to maximize his or her capability to live and function as independently as possible, enjoy an improved quality of life, and demonstrate successful outcomes.

Judi has also been the recipient of the "NAMI Advocate of the Year" award for her work with family members and persons diagnosed with a mental illness.

[Get Directions](#)

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### The RET Skeptic Book Club

**May 8 Sunday 2:00 - 4:00 pm**

**Location: Books-A-Million at 8513 Kingston Pike, Knoxville.**

## **“Devil's Game: How the United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam” by Robert Dreyfuss**

This book is the first comprehensive account of America's misguided efforts, stretching across decades, to dominate the strategically vital Middle East by courting and cultivating Islamic fundamentalism. Drawing on extensive archival research and interviews with dozens of policy makers and CIA, Pentagon, and foreign service officials, Robert Dreyfuss follows the trail of American collusion from support for the Muslim Brotherhood in 1950s Egypt, to links with Khomeini and Afghani jihadists, to longstanding ties between radical Islamists and the leading banks of the West. The result is as tragic as it is paradoxical: originally deployed as pawns to foil nationalism and communism, extremist mullahs and ayatollahs now dominate the landscape, thundering against freedom of thought, science, women's rights, secularism—and their former patron. Chronicling a history of double-dealing, cynical exploitation, and humiliating embarrassment that continues to this day, Devil's Game reveals a pattern that, far from furthering democracy or security, ensures a future of blunders and blowback.

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### **RET Third Sunday Meeting**      *Note different time!*

**May 15 Sunday**      **10:30 a.m.**

**No regular meeting**

**Annual Speaker Jerry DeWitt at 2:00 PM instead**

### **Annual Guest Speaker**

**May 15 Sunday**      **2:00 pm**

**Pellissippi State Community College, Goins Auditorium**

**"How non-believers can still save the world (if it's not already too late)."**

Ex-evangelical minister Jerry DeWitt will speak about what freethinkers can do for the world. Jerry's life is one of personal struggle and growth. Out of that has emerged a positive and inspiring spokesperson for Freethinkers and humanity in general.

Jerry DeWitt was the first "graduate" of the Clergy Project. The Clergy Project was established in 2011 to provide a safe haven of protected, anonymous online community for former and active religious professionals who no longer hold to supernatural beliefs. <http://clergyproject.org>

Don't miss this chance to hear his inspiring message of hope and the future.

[Get Directions](#)

**May 14 Saturday**      **6:30 PM**

**Potluck Dinner for Jerry DeWitt**

**Phil and Sharron King's House** Call or email for directions: 865 982-8687 or [aledendecker@att.net](mailto:aledendecker@att.net)

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**RET Day of Reason Dinner**

## **RET Day of Reason Picnic**

**May 5 Thursday 4:00 pm**

**Tyson Park - Pavilion 1, 2351 Kingston Pike, Knoxville, TN 37919**

**Opens at 4:00 PM with Pot Luck and grilling beginning at 5:00.**

Come join The Rationalists of East Tennessee, Free Thinkers, Atheists, Agnostics and Humanists in a celebrating The Annual National Day of Reason. The Public is welcome at this prayer and submission free, family event.

We provide the Pavilion and the fire to cook on. Please bring food & drink for yourself and some to share in fellowship with others.

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## **RET Reflections Meeting**

No Reflections this month.

*Reflections needs a new host location.*

If you can host please contact Carl Lededecker via e-mail ([lededecker@att.net](mailto:lededecker@att.net)) or by phone (865 982-8687)

We would like to thank Schera Chadwick for her years of service in providing a home base for Reflections when other homes are not available. Schera will be glad to continue to help with topics and some organization, but will no longer be able to host the meetings every other month. Please step up for this important service.

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## **RET Skeptics Book Club - New Books List**

**June 12, 2016 - Unfinished business : women, men, work, family by Anne-Marie Slaughter**

**July 10, 2016 - Sapiens: A brief history of humankind by Yuval Noah Harari**

**August 14, 2016 - Galileo's Middle Finger by Alice Dreger**

**September 11, 2016 - The Devil's Chessboard: Allen Dulles, the CIA, and the Rise of America's Secret Government by David Talbot**

**October 9, 2016 - The Right Way to Lose a War: America in an Age of Unwinnable Conflicts by Dominic Tierney**

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## **Other Activities in the area**

### **RET/ASK Freethought Forum TV**

**Tuesdays 5:00 – 6:00 pm**

Freethought Forum TV is looking for people to be on the show. Contact Larry Rhodes or Lee Erickson if you are interested.

Knoxville: Comcast Channel 12 Charter Channel 6 Free streaming on [ctvknox.org](http://ctvknox.org).

Right after the show a co-host of the program holds The Atheist Society of Knoxville Meet-up at Barley's on Jackson Avenue in Knoxville's Old City. Volunteer hosts and suggestions for topics would be welcome for all of these programs. Contact Larry Rhodes at [larryr@usit.net](mailto:larryr@usit.net) or Lee Erickson at [forresterickson@comcast.net](mailto:forresterickson@comcast.net).

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## **Sunday Assembly Knoxville** Live Better, Help Often, Wonder More

**May 22 - The Purge: Purging our lives of things we do not want or need.**

Location: The International at 940 Blackstock Ave., Knoxville, TN

Time: 10:30 AM

For other SA activities go to <http://knoxville-tn.sundayassembly.com> and click on "Calendar."

Email: [saknoxville@gmail.com](mailto:saknoxville@gmail.com)

Website: <http://knoxville-tn.sundayassembly.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Sunday-Assembly-Knoxville/595906073848559>

Meetup: <http://www.meetup.com/Sunday-Assembly-Knoxville/>

**Let's Go Hiking: Sunday Assembly Event** - May 29th, 9:30 AM at trail head of Spruce Flats Falls

Carpool form Northshore Kroger leaves at 8:00 AM

Option of 8 mile strenuous hike or 3 mile slightly strenuous hike to falls only.

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## **Future Activities**

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### **American Humanist 75th Anniversary Conference**

**May 26-29, 2016 Chicago conference.americanhumanist.org**

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### **Reason Rally 2 Washington DC June 4, 2016**

**Anyone interested in riding a chartered bus to the Reason Rally? If so contact ([carl\\_ledendecker@yahoo.com](mailto:carl_ledendecker@yahoo.com))**

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***Please add your name to the RET Directory so friends can contact you.***

### **RET's New Web Site and Wild Apricot**

How to set up you new password and log in. Don't forget to enter you information into the RET Directory (viewable by members only and customizable by you so people see only what you want them to).

### **TO LOG IN**

Go to Rationalists.org. There , just above The Thinkers head, you will see a "Login" button. That's right, click on it. Use the email address that is already associated with RET contacts and mailings and click on "Forgot Password". There you will enter the email address and Captcha code. From there follow the directions.

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# Bangladesh's war on Modernity, Especially Atheists

Excerpts from: <http://www.cnn.com/2016/03/02/politics/religion-super-tuesday/index.html>

HOLY CCTV  
In Bangladesh, Serial Killing In The Name Of God  
MAAJID NAWAZ04.26.165:25 PM ET

Source: <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/04/26/in-bangladesh-serial-killing-in-the-name-of-god.html>

"There really is no other way to put this. Free thinkers in Bangladesh are being serially hacked to death in their homes. An infamous hit list appeared in 2013 naming 84 "atheist bloggers." By the end of 2015 there had been seven such murders across the country, and, tragically, this past week alone claimed three more victims."

Atheists are among the most discriminated-against groups in the world at present, and the most persecuted minority-within-a-minority among Muslims.

"Imagine what it must be like for atheists living in Muslim-majority countries where such a belief is a criminal offense."

"So beleaguered is this minority that you can be put to death for atheism in no less than 13 countries around the world. In 39 countries the law mandates a prison sentence for blasphemy, and six of these are Western countries."

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## New book claims Christopher Hitchens considered Christianity near death.

### No it's not true.

See more at: <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/danthropology/2016/04/new-book-claims-christopher-hitchens-considered-christianity-near-death-no-its-not-true/>

A new book by Christian author, Larry Alex Taunton, an evangelical Christian who knew Christopher Hitchens for three years makes the claim that Hitchens had privately considered converting to Christianity before his death in his new book, *The Faith of Christopher Hitchens: The Restless Soul of the World's Most Notorious Atheist*.

In answering a question about Hitchens's non-belief Taunton states: "His tone was marked by a sincerity that wasn't typical of the man," Taunton writes. "Not on this subject anyway. A lifetime of rebellion against God had brought him to a moment where he was staring into the depths of eternity, teetering on the edge of belief."

"This is when the story takes a really fictional turn for the worse. Taunton, who alludes strongly to Hitchens's conversion, acknowledges in his book that he has "no reports of a deathbed conversion" for Hitchens, but continues to speculate that the author of *God is Not Great*, sought out the Church before his death in 2011."

"At the end of his life, Christopher's searches had brought him willingly, if secretly, to the altar," Taunton writes at the end of the book. "Precisely what he did there, no one knows."

He continued by claiming that Hitchens believed he was too famous of an atheist to admit that he had a change-of-heart.

It seems that Hitchens is now with Darwin and Ingersoll in the category of fictionalized conversions.

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Edited by Carl Ledendecker

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