

Rationalists of East Tennessee Newsletter

September 2014
Edited by Carl Ledendecker

Tokay Backyard Olympics

September 1 Monday (Labor Day) 3:00 pm - Dark Thirty

Location: 8905 Garrison Drive, Knoxville, TN 37931

Children of all ages 2 to 102 years old

Please RSVP - Call Steve and Carol Tokay, 691-6816.

No skills required. Events will include: Ring toss, Paper Plate Discus, Sidewlk Art, Cross Country Tricycle Race.

What to Bring: Meat for grill, side dish for six to share. (A few extra portable grills will help.) Buns, condiments and drinks will be provided. Tokay Olympic Medals will be awarded. Fireworks at the end.

First Sunday Meeting

September 7 Sunday 10:30 - 12:30

Pellissippi State Community College, Goins Building, Cafeteria Annex

We will return to the Council for Secular Humanism's video presentation "American Freethought."

Topics presented include Women's Rights and Freethought Movements. Seneca Falls, Darwin, Comstock (not a freethinker), the American Tract Society, "The Truth Seeker" and Robert Green Ingersoll will be covered.

The Executive Producer is Tom Flynn who spoke in a general public meeting last Nov. and will be back again this coming November.

Refreshments and coffee at 10 am before this presentation.

The RET Skeptic Book Club

September 14 Sunday 4:00 – 6:00 pm

“Animal Wise: The Thoughts and Emotions of Our Fellow Creatures” by Virginia Morell.

Noted science writer Virginia Morell explores the frontiers of research on animal cognition and emotion, offering a surprising and moving exploration into the hearts and minds of wild and domesticated animals.

Have you ever wondered what it is like to be a fish? Or a parrot, dolphin, or elephant? Do they experience thoughts that are similar to ours, or have feelings of grief and love? These are tough questions, but scientists are answering them. They know that ants teach, earthworms make decisions, and that rats love to be tickled. They’ve discovered that dogs have thousand-word vocabularies, that parrots and dolphins have names, and that birds practice their songs in their sleep. But how do scientists know these things? *Animal Wise* takes us on a dazzling odyssey into the inner world of animals from ants to wolves, and among the pioneering researchers who are leading the way into once-forbidden territory: the animal mind. With thirty years of experience covering the sciences, Morell uses her formidable gifts as a story-teller to transport us to field sites and laboratories around the world, introducing us to animal-cognition scientists and their surprisingly intelligent and sensitive subjects. She explores how this rapidly evolving, controversial field has only recently overturned old notions about why animals behave as they do. She probes the moral and ethical dilemmas of recognizing that even “lesser animals” have cognitive abilities such as memory, feelings, personality, and self-awareness—traits that many in the twentieth century felt were unique to human beings. By standing behaviorism on its head, Morell brings the world of nature brilliantly alive in a nuanced, deeply felt appreciation of the human-animal bond, and she shares her admiration for the men and women who have simultaneously chipped away at what we think makes us distinctive while offering a glimpse of where our own abilities come from.

Lunch Get-together

September 17 Wednesday 11:15 am Black Horse Brewery, Kingston Pike in Bearden.
 Questions? Contact Pauline, 437-9966 or hpauline0719@yahoo.com

RET Third Sunday Meeting

September 21 Sunday 10:30 p.m. – 12:30 pm

Pellissippi State Community College, Goins Building, Cafeteria Annex

Professor Phil Hamlin of the University will discuss "Perspectives on Evil"

RET Reflections Meeting

September 28 Sunday

Check calendar at rationalists.org for upcoming details.

New Book Club List

October	“NONBELIEVER NATION: the rise of secular Americans” by David Noise
November	“The Divide: American Injustice in the Age of the Wealth Gap” by Matt Taibbi
December	Break no book club meeting
January	“How Jesus became God” by Bart Ehrman
February	“Astronaut’s Guide to Life on Earth” by Chris Hadfield
March	“Hope after Faith” by Jerry DeWitt
April	“A Troublesome Inheritance” by Nicholas Wade
May	“Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead” by Sheryl Sandberg
June	“Stuff Matters: Exploring the Marvelous Materials That Shape Our Man-Made World” by Mark Miodownik
July	“House of Debt: How They (and You) Caused the Great Recession, and How We Can Prevent It from Happening Again” by Atif Mian

Book Club time change?

Several members would like to change the meeting time of the book club to have more daylight friendly hours during the winter months. Barnes and Nobles can accommodate an earlier time so I am soliciting comments about moving the meeting time. Sunset in January is about 5:30PM, so I would think that the change would be to 2-4PM or there about. They open at 11AM on Sunday and need some time to get ready so it would probably have to be in the afternoon. Please let me know how this would impact you and your attendance. Any time change would be subject to review by the RET board, so I will collect the comments and report to the board/membership. My email is rmorris126@comcast.net. Thanks for participating. I would like to have the hours set one way or another by the daylight saving time change.

RET/ASK Freethought Forum

Tuesdays 5:00 – 6:00 pm

In Knoxville: Comcast Channel 12 Charter Channel 6
Surrounding areas: free streaming on ctvknox.org.

Show topics are subject to change.

Right after the show a co-host of the program holds The Atheist Society of Knoxville meet up at Barley's in Knoxville's Old Town. Volunteer hosts and suggestions for topics would be welcome for all of these programs. Contact Larry Rhodes at larryr@usit.net or Joe Barnhart at tempolark@hotmail.com

Activity Coordination

RET has been expanding our activities list, trying new social activities and receiving suggestions for many other types of events and educational activities.

As a result the old ways of scheduling have resulted in some confusion and frustration. When we had just three basic activities and a few special events scheduling and communicating were not very difficult.

Now, as you can see in the list below, things have become much more complex. Having more options is a good thing but does require us to have some form of overall coordination.

So, in an attempt to simplify this varied assortment (via structure and clarity) we are setting up an "Overall Event Coordinator" position.

Carl Ledendecker, that's me, will be initially filling and refining this position. There will certainly be a need to tweak the system proposed so feedback is welcomed.

Goals:

Clarify priorities and purposes of existing events/activities. Nothing is cast in stone but some activities are well anchored.

Avoid problematic conflicts in scheduling.

Increase awareness among members and the general public of what RET has to offer.

Provide a way to define and communicate informal get-togethers without formal scheduling through RET.

Notify and inform members and the general public about other events and activities of interest locally, regionally and nationally.

Structure:

Overall Event Coordinator

Group/Activities Coordinators who submit (in a timely fashion to be defined) scheduling times, dates, locations, and description.

General input of information from members and related groups. This process will eventually integrate with the new Web presence we are developing and the RET Newsletter.

RET Activities

Activist activities

Special Freethought Days, e.g. National Day of Reason, Ingersoll's birthday

Protests

Public Education, e.g. booths at area events

Monthly Recurring Basic Activities

1st Sunday

RET Skeptic Book Club

3rd Sunday Meeting

Reflections/ Social Event

1st Wednesday Lunch Bunch

Recurring Annual Events

Summer Solstice

Winter Solstice

Annual Speaker

Hypatia FFRF

N.C. Picnic

Other Recurring Activities

Trash Pick-up

Other Activities or Pending Activities (might become regular recurring)

Random Social Activities

Movies

Hiking Biking

Canoeing

Social meals

Games

Back-Yard Olympics

Halloween (many ways to have fun)

Educational Activities

Special Speaker

Road Trips

Conventions

Outside RET scheduling control

Outside events of interest

Conventions

Atheist Society of Knoxville

Freethought Forum TV

Darwin Day UT

Camp Quest

Relevant Meet-up Events

Sunday Assembly (if happens)

UU Church special events

Unexpected opportunities, e.g. UT speakers

Small Informal Group Activities

Unofficial, around 5 or less, unpublished (monitored or unmonitored web site presence?) Potentially could become a formal RET activity.

Movies

Hiking

Canoeing

Breakfast, lunches, dinners

Games

Back Yard Olympics

Fiction Book Club

Road trips, e.g. Dayton Scopes Trial reenactment

Freethought Conventions

Speakers of interest that are not Freethought connected, e.g. astronomy, history, art, etc.

Quotes

“When I got untethered from the comfort of religion, it wasn’t a loss of faith for me: it was a discovery of self. I had a faith that I’m capable enough to handle any situation. There’s a peace in understanding that I have only one life, here and now, and I’m responsible for it.

Brad Pitt

The First Atheist Channel

American Atheists have started Atheist TV. Available through Roku, an on demand television station.

It will be exclusively atheist, humanist and freethought programming.

For those who do not subscribe to Roku it is available live on line at <http://atheists.org/atheistTV/live>.

Don’t believe in ghosts?

Watch this and see the actual video recording of a sighting in the forest (somewhere). The image is fleeting so watch carefully. This footage leaves little doubt about the actual existence of ghosts

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uyQWPLHrbJY>

Dues and donations can be sent to “RET, P.O. Box 51634, Knoxville, TN 37950”, or via Pay Pal through the link at www.rationalists.org. Direct payment can also be made to RET treasurer, Eliot Specht

Reimbursement

Remember that you can ask for reimbursement for food, supplies, etc. that you provide for RET.

FEEL FREE to Send me information or articles by you.

Anyone who has something to submit for publication in the RET Newsletter please e-mail it to ledendecker@earthlink.net. The decision to include the submission is at the discretion of the current editor (me) but I am not all that picky.