

Rationalists of East Tennessee Newsletter

February 2015
Edited by Carl Ledendecker

First Sunday Meeting

February 1 Sunday 10:30 - 12:30

Pellissippi State Community College, Goins Building, Cafeteria Annex

The annual RET business meeting is here!

At this meeting board members and officers will be elected for the coming year. There will be some reports on the past year and discussion about member suggestions for next year.

Please contact Aleta Ledendecker (aledendecker@me.com or 865-982-8687) if you are interested in being on the board. Officer nominees must have served on the board for at least one year (at any time in the past).

Nominations can also be made at the meeting.

Remember you have to be a paid member to vote or serve on the Board, so pay your dues before or at the meeting if you haven't done so for 2015.

The current slate of candidates is:

President: Larry Rhodes
Vice-President: Lee Erickson
Treasurer: Eliot Specht
Secretary: Aleta Ledendecker

Directors: Pat Cannon, Victoria Deren, Jimena Goich, Jonas Holdeman, Ralph Isler, Carl Ledendecker, Logan Mulford, Julie Rogish

Dues

Dues are \$35 for most individuals but students & low-income persons may join at a reduced rate of \$15.

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

The RET Skeptic Book Club

February 8 Sunday 2:00 – 4:00 pm

Note: This is a new time AND LOCATION.

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

“An Astronaut's Guide to Life on Earth” by Chris Hadfield

This is an inspirational memoir of space exploration and hard-won wisdom, from an astronaut who has spent a lifetime making the impossible a reality. Colonel Chris Hadfield has spent decades training as an astronaut and has logged nearly 4,000 hours in space. During this time he has broken into a Space Station with a Swiss army knife, disposed of a live snake while piloting a plane, and been temporarily blinded while clinging to the exterior of an orbiting spacecraft. The secret to Col. Hadfield’s success - and survival - is an unconventional philosophy he learned at NASA: prepare for the worst - and enjoy every moment of it. In “An Astronaut’s Guide to Life on Earth”, Col. Hadfield takes readers deep into his years of training and space exploration to show how to make the impossible possible. Through eye-opening, entertaining stories filled with the adrenaline of launch, the mesmerizing wonder of spacewalks and the measured, calm responses mandated by crises, he explains how conventional wisdom can get in the way of achievement - and happiness. His own extraordinary education in space has taught him some counter intuitive lessons: don’t visualize success, do care what others think, and always sweat the small stuff. You might never be able to build a robot, pilot a spacecraft, make a music video or perform basic surgery in zero gravity like Col. Hadfield. But his vivid and refreshing insights will teach you how to think like an astronaut, and will change, completely, the way you view life on Earth - especially your own. (Amazon Review)

RET Third Sunday Meeting

February 15 Sunday 10:30 a.m.

Pellissippi State Community College, Goins Auditorium

Professor Erin Darby of the University of Tennessee will speak on the rise of monotheism in early Israelite society.

RET Reflections Meeting

No February Reflections

Schera Chadwick & Ted Lollis

9219 George Williams Road, 37922;

Reflections will be every other month.

If anyone wants to have a Reflections meeting at their home, on the “off month” please contact Schera Chadwick at 865.690.8742 and Carl Ledendecker at 982-8687.

Book Club List

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

RET/ASK Freethought Forum

Tuesdays 5:00 – 6:00 pm

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

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

Stuff of Evolution **Article by James Wallman, author of "Stuffocation"**

Excerpts

“Just as evolutionary psychology explains why we eat far more than we need, it also throws light on why we keep buying more, even when we already have far more than enough.

We are now living in an age of abundance in the West. Before, material goods were expensive and scarce. Clothes were so hard to come by that they were handed down from generation to generation. A historian called Eve Fisher has calculated that before 1750 and the onset of the industrial revolution a shirt would have cost around £2,000 in today's money. But now, things - shirts, shoes, toys and a million other consumer items - are cheap.

Once again, our inbuilt impulses have yet to catch up. As a result, many millions of us are filling our homes and lives, and suffocating under too much stuff.

This problem, which I call "stuffocation", is the material version of the obesity epidemic. Since obesity is one of the most worrying problems we face, as individuals and as a society, saying that stuffocation is similar is quite a statement.

But the comparison works, because both obesity and stuffocation have similar numbers of sufferers. About two-thirds of people are overweight, according to the UK government. But it's also been estimated about two in every three wish they had less stuff.”

Source: “The Hazards of Too Much Stuff”, BBC News Magazine, Jan. 23, 12015

Ingersoll on Children

"Why should I allow that same God to tell me how to raise my kids, who had to drown His own?"

A Point of View: Why tyrants are afraid of art and beauty by AL Kennedy

Excerpt from article in BBC News Magazine Jan. 23, 2015

“Why mention roses in a world where aeroplanes full of people fall out of the sky and shoppers are crushed by accident while they walk with each other under Christmas lights - a world where children are preyed upon and where human beings will shoot, or bomb, or torture, or kidnap other human beings, will act within the grip of philosophies turned toxic by terrible certainties - certainties which deny reality and must therefore be overmastering and cruel ? And sometimes deaths are classified as important and sometimes they're ignored. We live in a dark place.

Or why mention roses in a world where health workers willingly risk both terrible diseases and war zones, simply to stop strangers dying - a world where people make living organ donations to help others survive (in the UK alone about 1,000 donations every year)? And this is a world where volunteers clear mines in former conflict zones like Colombia, Vietnam and Cambodia - a world where public generosity can shame government, a world of first aiders and companions and mentors and foster parents, of volunteering, where good will organises efforts to defend children, or feed the hungry. A world where people march and fill their streets to demonstrate their will to keep their peace. We live in an enlightened place, rich in necessary beauties. So why bother with roses?

Because I believe in what we might call unnecessary beauty, in art. And an artist would say that, but then again, individuals and groups who have sought to control, or extinguish populations, to marginalise or demonise this or that type of human being - they seem to believe in the power of art even more than I do. They ardently seek out and restrict those intimate, idiosyncratic joys we find in the songs we sing, the stories that travel with us, the verses that sustain us, the paintings and drawings and sculptures, windows and buildings, voices and performances, images that lift us and give us dignity - the things that show us the light in our world and in ourselves, the things that show us individual human beings have the power to create wonders which outlast them and which transcend every classification of gender, race, religion, nationality, age.

Art is a power, and much of its true power is invisible, private, memorised and held even in prison cells and on forced marches, so you can see why totalitarians of all kinds dislike it.”

Other Events of Note

Sunday Assembly Knoxville, Feb. 22 - This month's theme is "Peace" Charles Towne Landing HOA Club House 11:00 am.

American Atheists National convention in Memphis, TN at the Peabody Hotel, April 2-5

American Humanist Association Annual Conference Denver, CO May 7-10 at Grand Hyatt Hotel

Center for Inquiry Conference, June 11-15 Amherst N.Y. (Marriott Hotel Buffalo Niagara

Richard Dawkins, Rebeca Goldstein and Susan Jacoby will be speakers.

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@att.net. The decision to include the submission is at the discretion of the current editor (me), but I am not all that picky.