

**Special Interest
Articles:**

- September HAM meeting
- Summer Solstice Party 2005
- Religion in Manitoba Schools.

**Individual
Highlights:**

- School Prayer
In Garden
Valley SD
Page 2,3
- Support Tim
Wall
Page 3,4
- Ham
presentation
To MHRC
Page 5
- Movie Review
Page 6

Published by and for the Humanist Association of Manitoba

President: Barrie Webster

Editor: Dennis Ousey

Monthly Meeting

The September meeting of the Humanist Association of Manitoba will be held at the Viscount Gort Hotel on the 10th of September. The meeting will begin at 5 PM with a 'meet and greet' and a meal shall be ordered at 5:30 PM or so. The meal will be ordered from the 'coffee shop

menu' and we expect to eat at around 6 PM. The program will commence at 7 PM and the topic, which will be decided at the executive meeting, will be presented. The meeting is not expected to last beyond 9 PM. Be sure to come out and support our group. Bring a friend!

Bring two friends even!

Summer Solstice 2005

A big thanks to Helen and John for hosting one of the most successful summer solstice parties in HAM history. The party was held on June 18th at Helen and John's new home in Mitchell. It was a great day for a barbecue, sunny and warm. There was a good turnout among the members and especially refreshing were the new people

who showed up and gave a sparkle to the conversations. After a delicious meal which everyone cooked for themselves, there was a concert given by our multi-talented, banjo picking President Barrie Webster. It took the form of a sing-a-long and some of the songs that Barrie picked were a hoot. All had a good time.

A number of people left after the singsong but a few of the others stayed and discussed some humanist issues over the remaining wine.

To see some pictures of the party go to our home page at: <http://mb.humanists.ca/>

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Religion in Manitoba Public Schools

. It's time they took a look at what the separation of the church and state is."

Tim Wall, a courageous substitute teacher in the Garden Valley School Division, has challenged the Province of Manitoba to ban religious exercises in Manitoba public schools in the so-called Bible belt in South-west Manitoba. Tim says that, "the church, any church should have no place in our public schools".

Here are some excerpts from an article written by Mr. Martin for the Wpg Free Press on July 18th, 2005:

They do scripture reading every day," Wall said. "My concern is: it's a public school system. We're living in the 21st century. It's time they took a look at what the separation of the church and state is."

Wall said Garden

Valley Collegiate has a scripture reading over the public address system, while elementary and middle years schools have teachers read in the classroom from the Bible or other religious material. Students say The Lord's Prayer each day.

Garden Valley superintendent Dom Wilkins said the division complies with the Public Schools Act, and has never received a complaint.

"It's been standard practice as long as there's been a school board," Wilkins said.

Wilkins said parents petition the division each year to hold religious exercises in each school as

part of the regular opening exercises. "Our parents petitioned us to do it. We comply with that request -- we do it at the beginning of the morning," he said.

The Public Schools Act allows parents to petition for their children to take part in religious exercises. In Winnipeg School Division, children whose parents sign the petition enter the school early to hold their exercises, before other children arrive and before the official start to the school day.

Provincial guidelines issued in 1993 by then-deputy education minister John Carlyle specified that religious exercises must occur outside the instructional day.

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That students choosing voluntarily to take part should go to a location elsewhere in the school -- rather than requiring non-participants to leave the classroom -- and that schools and divisions should not themselves organize parents to sign the petitions

required to conduct exercises.

Every school in the Steinbach area conducts religious exercises under terms of an agreement with the Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties (MARL) from the early 1990s, said Hanover School Division assistant superintendent Ken Klassen.

Tim Wall has been vilified for his stand on this issue. He has been let go from his summer job in Winkler and he does not know if he will be getting much work as a substitute teacher in the fall in the Winkler area. People will stop him in the street to tell him that they are praying for him.

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A Letter to the editor in support of Tim Wall

I have just read the July 17 article about substitute teacher Tim Wall and his campaign to eliminate religious exercises from Manitoba Public Schools (*Worship expelled in Bible belt?*)

I couldn't agree more with Mr. Wall's opinion that

we should have a separation of religion and schools. Public schools should be a place where everyone feels welcome. Not all students are of the Christian faith. Some students have no religion at all. I anticipate an outcry from some of those who think religions are the

sources of morality. They will claim that without the religious component schools will not be teaching values. But they will be wrong. I taught for many years and I transmitted ethics to my students without reference to religion.

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Children should not be forced to single themselves out. This could lead to 'bullying'.

I applaud Mr. Wall for having the courage to stand up to his employer.

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Others will claim that schools such as the one in Winkler are only responding to the wishes of the community. They will say that the majority of parents wanted the religious exercises. But the majority should never use its power to suppress the rights of minorities. Where are the rights of Muslims, Jews, or atheists in

Manitoba schools?

One final argument about this issue: children should not be made to single themselves out. They should not have to declare themselves as "opting out." Having witnessed how some children bully others, I have seen how devastating it is to a child to be perceived as different and be ostracized or berated by others.

for the courage to stand up to his employer. The minister of education and the government should decide once and for all to enforce the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in Manitoba schools. Get religion out of the public schools.

CATHERINE OUSEY

Winnipeg

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I applaud Mr. Wall

Humanist Humour

Old Age

Morris, an 82 year-old man, went to the doctor to get a physical. A few days later the doctor saw Morris walking down the street with a gorgeous young woman on his arm.

A couple of days later

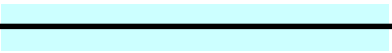
the doctor spoke to Morris and said, "You're really doing great, aren't you?"

Morris replied, "Just doing what you said, Doc: 'Get a hot mamma and be cheerful.'"

The doctor said, "I didn't say that. I said,

'you've got a heart murmur. Be careful.'"

Humour is a universal language.



**Presentation to the Manitoba Human Rights Commission:
May 10, 2004**

The **Humanist Association of Manitoba** made a presentation to the Manitoba Human Rights commission over one year ago and our complaint was summarily dismissed. Among other things we suggested that the MHRC act on the following:

"We respect the right to freedom of belief and to education, and understand the desire of parents to bring up their children with the family's

beliefs. However, it is not the job of publicly funded schools to instill a religious faith in children, and provinces should not be obliged to provide schools catering for every shade of belief or philosophy. Parents naturally want to bring up their children to believe what they think true and important.

The province should not undertake the role of transmitting such a belief. The province has its own interest in ensuring that children grow up to be responsible and capable citizens. It must design a system of education that serves that end and promotes the interests of all children."

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Computer Corner

Free Alternatives to Big-Bucks Apps

Not all of us can afford to buy important apps with hefty price tags even if the rest of the world can. So why not try the least expensive alternatives - free ones? Sure, they may not be as stable, and they may be prevalent like those "name" programs, but hey - they're FREE. Here are my favourite shareware/open-source

alternatives to the big boys:

Adobe Photoshop - Alternative: The GIMP - <http://gimp.org/>

MS Office - Alternative: ABI WORD - <http://www.abisource.com/>

Adobe Illustrator - Alternative: KARBON14 - <http://koffice.org/>

WinZip - Alternative: IZARC - <http://www.izsoft.dir.bg/>

Norton AntiVirus - Alternative: AVG - http://www.grisoft.com/us/us_index.php

*Free alternatives for Computer software. Here is another one: <http://www.openoffice.org/> one of Barrie's favourites!

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Movie Review: Heart of the Beholder

Executive Producer:
Darlene Lieblich
Reviewed by
Catherine Ousey

Independently produced movie, "Heart of the Beholder" was released amid controversy this summer. Right-wing religious groups condemned it and conducted an e-mail campaign against it. For this reason alone it is worthy of viewing by humanists and atheists.

Based on a true story from the 1980s about a St. Louis couple whose video store business was

targeted by the Citizens For Decency. When the couple would not remove from their shelves movies deemed by CFD to be indecent, they were charged with selling pornography. Although cleared of the charge, they lost their business and endured death threats against their daughter.

The actors do a good job of portraying the characters, making them believable. The filmmaker has

avoided too much bias by making all the characters realistic and often conflicted, no matter which side of the controversy they are on.

One criticism of the movie is that it has trouble with tone. The first half is mostly dark and at one point it feels like a psychological thriller. The second half has the tone of a comedy. A plot twist and the revenge achieved by the main characters make this movie entertaining.

HAM Members Hold Summer Party

By Catherine Ousey

Many members of the Humanist Association of Manitoba enjoyed a potluck meal at the

home of David Parker near Silver Falls on August 20. Our thanks go to David for once again hosting the party. Good wine,

good food and great conversation with friends. It just doesn't get any better than that!



**Just say NO
to religion**