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Manitoba Humanist

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President: Barrie
Webster

We're on the
Web!

See us at:

mb.humanists.ca

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Editor: Catherine Ousey

NEXT MEETING

VISCOUNT GORT HOTEL

MAY 13, 2006

5:00 PM

President Barrie Webster will give a presentation about the course which will be offered at U of W on Modern Humanism and he will lead a discussion on Modern Humanism

Dinner may be ordered from the coffee shop menu

SUMMER SOLSTICE PARTY

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Saturday June 10 2006

HOSTED BY BARRIE AND PHYLLIS WEBSTER

Section E - 71 Wildwood Park
Winnipeg

BBQ Chicken and a Vegan dish will be provided
Bring a dessert or salad
Bring a lawn chair and BYOB

The early date was chosen to avoid conflict with the HAC AGM and conference in Vancouver

Letter to the Editor

Blind Testing, Blind Beliefs
By Stefan Bourrier

At the last HAM general meeting (April 8th 2006) we had Dr. Greg Chernish visit us and give a talk about Complimentary Medicine. When I first heard this term I almost didn't realize this was really what is more commonly referred to as Alternative Medicine. According to Dr. Chernish Complimentary Medicine (CM) is there to fill all the gaps in Conventional Medicine. This all sounds fine and dandy but as the talk went on I found I was quite unimpressed and a whole lot more skeptical.

*"...I felt
Alternative Medicine
was...mostly based on
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what sounds like weak
scientific studies."*

In the end I felt Conventional/Alternative Medicine was much like Intelligent Design/Creationism. Mostly based on anecdotal evidence and what sounds like weak scientific studies. As scientists and skeptics we must make sure we keep an open mind to new ideas but as the old adage continues, "But not so open our brains fall out."

Disappointingly the talk went from what could have been a very insightful explanation of the "Good Science" surrounding CM and boiled down to stories of miracles and mystic formulas containing duck spirits that can cure influenza. I'd like to assume that Greg was slightly nervous presenting what would normally be considered hokey ideas in front of a number of hard-line science folk. Hard-line carries a slightly negative connotation to it that skeptics are inflexible and while this seems true sometimes we just like our proof. With things like the "Placebo Effect" so common in Conventional Medicine studies we are confident that these psychological side effects are also present in CM studies. As in most pharmaceutical studies there is a bias by companies creating certain products to make sure their tests come across with excellent trial studies. Unethical yes, but quite common in the business practices of pharmaceutical producers.

Someone once said to me, "If it helps people feel better then why does it matter if it works for the reasons said or not." We can start down the slippery slope pretty quickly with this rationale and slow our understanding of the world around us. We must stand together
(continued next page)

with reason, rational and scientific inquiry if we are to better mankind. If something works to make someone better I want the real reason behind it, not the first idea someone comes up with.

I think it's important to mention that Dr. Chernish said CM treats the whole person and not just the illness. This is perhaps something all doctors should be made aware of. It comes down to common PR practices of the everyday. People love to feel heard, appreciated and most importantly understood. When we feel crummy we want someone to make us feel better but we want someone to understand that we feel ill. Perhaps it is that CM doctors make people feel better about themselves and this aids the body's natural abilities to heal itself. We've been living on this planet for quite some time without medicine of any type and did pretty well for the most part. The body is great at fixing things gone awry, and despite the possibility of sounding hard-line, without any energy pathways or mystical dead duck cures.

On Spirituality

By Barrie Hammond

Humanists prefer the word "spirituality" to "religiosity" believing it encompasses a broader spectrum of questions and appreciations than does the terminology of religion. Another dichotomy Humanists often make is that between science and religion. Perhaps the word spirituality may reduce this other division between

science and religion since most Humanists agree that we need both science and spirituality.

Benjamin Bloom used two words for high level thinking in his *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. His words in this book were "analysis" and "Synthesis". Today we might use the

words science and spirituality since much of what we have learned scientifically has come from analysis and much of what we know about saving the earth comes from spirituality. Bloom was right in that we need both analysis and synthesis, just as we need both science and spirituality.

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"...most Humanists agree that we need both science and spirituality."

“...1.2 billion people are suffering unnecessarily because this food is not shared equitably.”

Science is a cognitive approach to knowing which includes actions like locating genes, splitting atoms and observing trends in nature such as how acid rain affects trees. Spirituality is a more intuitive way of knowing which looks holistically at how knowing about genes and atoms might help humanity, and how acid rain might affect the maple syrup market.

Spirituality need not

be considered in conflict with science. They are mainly different ways of knowing. Without science we would have trouble feeding people, but without spirituality we might not be alerted to the fact that 1.2 billion people are suffering unnecessarily because this food is not shared equitably. Science might lead us to an “us” and “them” compartmentalization or to a fragmentation of people. Spirituality might signal that such

a dichotomy is not humane.

People appear to span a belief system from certainty to skepticism. I sense science and spirituality might help to reduce this span by showing that there is more to knowing than either reason or intuition.

HAM NUMBERS INCREASE BY 23.81%

“Helen pointed out that we should thank the members for helping us achieve this increase.”

At the April 6th executive meeting, Helen Friesen informed the executive that our organization has grown from January 2005 to January 2006 by 23.81%. She has submitted a report to the Humanist Association of Canada in hopes of

qualifying for one of the awards that has been offered by HAC.

Helen pointed out that we should thank the members for helping us achieve this increase.

The Executive passed a motion to thank the members of

HAM, new members for joining our organization and renewing members for encouraging friends to join HAM and for returning their own fees promptly.

Stephen Lewis Meets Students Without Borders



Students from College Jeanne-Sauve discuss Africa with Stephen Lewis

A group of students from College Jeanne-Sauve lead by teacher Diane Plamondon is making a difference. Through their organization Eleves Sans Frontieres (Students Without Borders), they have raised money to help an African village, M'Bour.

Mme. Plamondon states, "Many of my students suffer from

influenza." It is hoped their experiences will help them to think globally.

The group has already raised thousands of dollars in this three-year project, Afrique 2007 through bake sales, yard sales and other such community activities. The funds raised have benefitted the people of M'Bour and other nearby

villages in many ways: 500 eyeglasses, the training of 50 teachers for the school, \$1 000.00 in medical supplies and the construction of a community centre.

ESF hopes to be able to help the school outfit a computer lab that would be used by students during the day and be open to the residents in the evening.

Access the website at:
<http://www.afrique2007.org/>

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**HUMANIST ASSOCIATION OF CANADA
ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND AGM**

**“Humanism Without Borders
– Towards Global Harmony”**

VANCOUVER BC

JUNE 15 – 18 2006

The Coast Plaza Hotel and Suites

1763 Comox Street

information and registration at:

<http://www.bchumanist.ca/>