

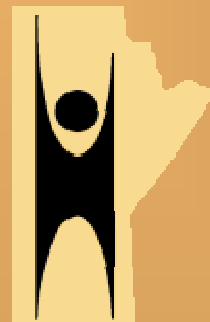
Manitoba Humanist



*PZ Myers,
biologist
and writer of
the science
blog
Pharyngula*

Published by and for the
Humanist Association of
Manitoba

*“We are beyond
belief”*



www.mb.humanists.ca

PZ Myers our guest speaker at AGM

“PZed” is in the house!

The Humanist Association of Manitoba is extremely pleased to have P.Z. Myers as our guest speaker for our Annual General Meeting on January 9th.

Professor Myers is an evolutionary biologist, and an Associate Professor at the University of Minnesota Morris. One of his areas of research is on zebrafish. (And he has a rather unique fondness for squid, too!)

However, he is better known as the prolific wordsmith behind the science blog Pharyngula, where, on the one hand, he writes about science, biology, evolutionary development, ... and squid;

and on the other, he comments on intelligent design, creationism, religion and atheism. He is a particularly outspoken critic of intelligent design (ID) and creationism – especially in relation to keeping religion (or ID) out of science education.

In my opinion, if there was a “fifth horseman” of atheism, Myers would be up there with Dawkins, Dennett, Harris and Hitchens.

Over the last few years, Myers has been involved in several highly controversial events. He was misled into being interviewed for what became the Ben Stein movie “Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed”, then denied entry to ***cont’d next page***



*Happy New Year!
Stay warm and drive
safe!*

the private screening – which he had legitimately registered for – while his guest, Richard Dawkins, went unnoticed. This incident happened at the Mall of America in Minneapolis. He immediately went to the Apple Store in the mall and live-blogged the entire event.

In 2008, Myers was soundly criticized for irreverently disposing of a communion wafer in what became known as “crackergate”, and he recently led a contingent of over 300 freethinkers on a tour of the so-called Creation “Museum” in Petersburg, Kentucky.

Myers doesn’t generally refer to himself as a humanist, so it came as a bit of surprise when he was named Humanist of the Year for 2009 by the American Humanist Association. Indeed, the title of his anticipated talk, “The War Between Science and Religion”, elicited some concern from within our membership.

While some of us on the Executive saw no problem with it, others were concerned with the term “war”, believing that it promotes the idea that there is an active conflict, which should be the main focus of humanists, and is destructive, rather than constructive.

Humanism is, of course, based on positive beliefs of inclusion and dignity for everyone. And most people – religious or not – want the same things, and have a “live and let live” attitude. But, there are still many people with far different views, and since PZ has crossed paths with a number of these individuals, his unique perspective and his experiences will be very instructive.

When I first sat down to write this article, I had just found out the topic for PZ’s lecture, and I was concerned that we didn’t have enough time left to properly advertise this event.

Well, I was wrong! We had the good fortune to receive some great press, and the attendance is now even beyond what I had imagined.

I’m pleased that so many of you are coming out for this event. It should be a great evening. And I know it’s probably rather illogical, but I do hope that the good fortune continues, and the “weather gods” don’t decide to hand us a

blizzard this weekend!

- Donna Harris

DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW:

“The “new atheism” (I don't like that phrase, either) is about taking a core set of principles that have proven themselves powerful and useful in the scientific world — you've probably noticed that many of these uppity atheists are coming out of a scientific background — and insisting that they also apply to everything else people do. These principles are a reliance on natural causes and demanding explanations in terms of the real world, with a documentary chain of evidence, that anyone can examine. The virtues are critical thinking, flexibility, openness, verification, and evidence. The sins are dogma, faith, tradition, revelation, superstition, and the supernatural. There is no holy writ, and a central idea is that everything must be open to rational, evidence-based criticism — it's the opposite of fundamentalism.”

- PZ Myers

“It appears attractive to dwell on the polarization between scientific findings and those religious beliefs that cannot accommodate what we now know to be scientific fact. As Humanists, however, we need, I believe, to see ourselves more often as educators rather than as crusaders. Educators are generally respected for their ability to spread learning and encourage thinking; crusaders tend to make a name for themselves through vanquishing their enemies and seeking to destroy those holding opposite life-views.”

“There are, indeed, a plethora of examples in which scientific thinking and religion are at loggerheads; however, hope lies not in perpetuating this conflict but in showing that religion and Humanism have some important things in common of much larger significance that promote an improved future for humankind and the planet.”

- Barrie Webster
Past President, HAM

AFFILIATION WITH HUMANIST CANADA

At our most recent meeting, the Executive of HAM voted in favour of continuing of affiliation with Humanist Canada.

In the past year, Humanist Canada (formerly known as the Humanist Association of Canada) has undergone significant changes. For example, their former president resigned, and was recently replaced by Dorothy Hays.

While the Executive expressed some reservations regarding some of the details of the agreement, it was generally agreed that continuing affiliation would not be detrimental in any way.

Indeed, affiliating with Humanist Canada ensures that we have a voice in the national arena. For instance, our upcoming events will be listed in the "regional groups" section of HC's website.

So, while it is up to the individual, the Executive group certainly encourages all HAM members to also become members of Humanist Canada. You can visit their website at www.humanistcanada.com, where you can complete a membership form on-line; mail them at 401 Weber Street North, Unit B, Waterloo, Ontario N2J 3J2, or call toll-free: 1.877.486.2671 (1.877.HUMANS1)

DONATIONS TO SERC

Once again, HAM has chosen the Sexuality Education Resource Centre (SERC) as our charity of choice for the Solstice season. We have sent their organization a donation on behalf of our entire membership.

SERC's mission is to "promote sexual health through education", and their work really does affect most everyone. They offer support and programs for everyone, from teens through to seniors.

We encourage everyone to support this

organization however they can. In addition to financial donations, SERC also has volunteer opportunities available. SERC can be reached at (204) 982-7800, or they can be found on the web at www.serc.mb.ca.

REMINDER – PLEASE PAY YOUR DUES

It's that time of year once again, when your HAM membership dues ... are due! All memberships follow the calendar year and expire on December 31st. If you haven't already done so, please send a renewal form and your payment to our treasurer Helen Friesen. Or ... you can also bring your dues to the Annual General Meeting on January 9th. However, if you haven't renewed your membership by the start of that meeting, you are not eligible to vote at the AGM.

PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL MESSAGE



Greetings,

2009 has ended and the beginning of 2010 is upon us! I am sure that many of you have taken time to reflect on the progress that our organization has made in recent months.

We face many challenges, including the need for a more central place to hold our meetings now that we no longer have access to the meeting rooms that we have grown accustomed to at the Viscount Gort Hotel.

Our demographics have also changed substantially and younger people are coming out to meet and greet with us at each of our monthly meetings. All of this change presents an

opportunity for improvement and it means that we should be looking to identify the manner in which individual interests will change within our organization.

Activity based events are a must for the upcoming year. Field trips, visits to various locations such as museums, as well as meetings with other groups interested in humanism & human rights should be a part of our plans for the New Year.

Humanism in Manitoba has a younger face that ever before and we need to ensure that we capture that youthful energy in our programs.

- Jeffrey Olsson
President

HAM 2009 FINANCIAL REPORT



We started the year with \$2,502.22 in the bank and as of December 19, 2009 our bank balance was \$2,955.69. Our income in 2009 came from membership dues (\$1,688) and donations (\$309 to date). Our thanks and appreciation go to all those who donate to HAM! Tax deductible receipts will go out early in the new year.

All members of the executive contribute to the organization by using their own office supplies and vehicles to carry out their duties for HAM and they do not ask to be reimbursed. This is greatly appreciated! Some members will submit expenses but ask they it be considered a donation. The largest gift in kind that HAM received in 2009 came from Grant Rogerson and Donna Harris. They purchased a projector for \$660.75 and donated it to HAM. Our warmest thanks to them for their kind generosity!

Our largest expense category in 2009 was meeting expenses, which were in the way of room rentals. We rented meeting rooms in hotels in the months of February and September, and these two added up to \$459.74. The February meeting included snacks and beverages.

The second largest expense category was bank charges. To date those charges add up to \$343.68 with another \$30 (approximately) to come for the month of December. Minimum fees for our merchant account (which allows us to take payments by credit cards) are \$15, the minimum monthly bank charge for online banking is \$10, and then there is a service fee for each item (deposit and withdrawal) that flows through our account.

Other expenses include office supplies, postage, photocopying, guest speakers (meals, honorariums), a little bit of advertising, and some miscellaneous expenses.

It's been a pleasure to keep the books for HAM again this year and I thank all of you for the privilege.

- Helen Friesen
Treasurer

NEWSLETTER & LIBRARY REPORT



Twenty-Ten. The year I get organized!

2009 was a busy, stressful year for me – seeing that my family sold one house and moved into another, and we moved 2 people, 3 cats, 4 aquariums and everyone's stuff. I STILL can't find certain things, and I won't have everything unpacked until next summer.

Unfortunately, all this bustle affected both the

newsletter and the library.

While all of the books & videos got moved in one piece, we certainly haven't given the library the attention it deserves this year. One order of business for the coming year is to make more volumes available to members when they want to borrow books & other resources. The other is to continue to add to HAM's collection. If you have an idea for any book you'd like to see available, or for DVDs/videos, please let me know.

I managed to deliver 11 issues of this newsletter in 2009. They were generally well received, which is encouraging. They are a personal marathon every month, in a way. Getting them completed to my own satisfaction, and distributing them in time for the next meeting, is a regular exercise in discipline.

However, there are still too many articles which are my own work, or from my own point of view. I say Thank You to everyone who's helped supply content, and I'd love to receive more of it. Remember, this newsletter is for the entire group, so your input, ideas and recommendations are always welcome!

- Donna Harris
Newsletter Editor

CREATION: THE MOVIE FINALLY HERE

This British film is finally opening in Winnipeg in select theatres on January 22nd.

The story has been told before – it's about the conflict that Charles Darwin felt over his Theory of Evolution and his marriage to his religious wife, Emma. However, this film was chosen to open the Toronto International Film Festival last summer, and it got good reviews.



Sounds like a field trip to me!! Watch for an email later on in the month, or next month's newsletter.

UPCOMING EVENTS

January 9, 2010

Annual General Meeting

Location: Club Regent Casino Hotel

Time: AGM 4:00 pm (voting - members only)

Lecture 7:00 pm (free and open to the public)

Speaker: Prof. PZ Myers

Topic: "The War Between Science & Religion"

February 13, 2010

Monthly Meeting

Location: TBA

Speaker/Topic: Amnesty International

February 20, 2010

Bullshit Party @ The Olssons

77 Edmonton Street, 7:00 pm

February 18, 2010

Darwin Day

March 13, 2010

Monthly Meeting

Location: TBA

Speaker/Topic: Roots of Empathy (tentative)

Executive:

Jeff Olsson, President
Neil Schipper, Vice President
Helen Friesen, Treasurer
Heather McDonell, Secretary

Members at Large:

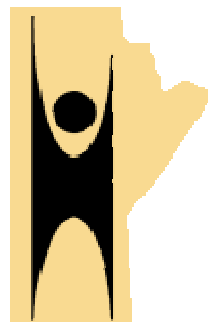
Myrna Donald
Barry Hammond
Donna Harris
Katie Higham
Jake Peters
Grant Rogerson
Sophie Shulman
Marlene Wallace
Barrie Webster

Newsletter Editor:
Donna L. Harris
ham_librarian@yahoo.ca

We're on the Web!

See us at:

mb.humanists.ca



Yes, I would like to BECOME A MEMBER of the Humanist Association of Manitoba

New Member Renewal

Membership Category:

- Individual Membership \$25.00
- Individual Limited Income \$10.00
- Household Membership* \$45.00
- Household Limited Income \$15.00

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____

Postal Code _____

Telephone#: _____ Cell #: _____

Email address: _____

*Household Memberships: Please give the names of all additional Humanists in your household 18 years or over:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

DONATION (Tax receipts issued for all donations of \$10 or more)

I would like to make a donation to HAM of:

- \$10 \$20 \$30 \$50 \$100
- Other: _____

PAYMENT: Cheque Money Order
 Visa Mastercard Amex

Please complete the following if paying by credit card:

Account No. _____

Expiry Date: ____/____

Name on Card: _____

Signature: _____

Please make cheque or money order payable to:
Humanist Association of Manitoba and mail to:
*Humanist Association of Manitoba, 7 Pinehurst Lane,
Mitchell, MB, R5G 2J3.*

Or bring your form and the fees to any HAM meeting and give it to Helen Friesen, or any member of the executive.