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August 2022

HUMANIST Monthly

A Publication of the Capital District Humanist Society
Connecting the Secular Humanist Community of Upstate New York, Western Massachusetts, and Southern Vermont

Sunday, August 14th, 2022, 1 PM - Anthony Barnhart, Ph.D.

Magic in the Lab: Psychological Insights from Magicians

Recent years have seen widespread interest in a “science of magic,” that learns from the psychological insights and methods of magicians, who are themselves informal cognitive scientists, testing their hypotheses in the real world. In just the last decade, renowned magicians have authored papers meant to be read not by magicians, but by scientists who study attention and perception.

In this presentation, Dr. Barnhart will discuss the long history of interaction between psychologists and magicians. Along the way, using live performance and video, he will introduce some of the techniques and theories from the world of magic that have inspired research in laboratories around the world (including his own).

Cognitive scientist, Anthony Barnhart, Ph.D., is Chair of the Department of Psychological Science at Carthage College (Kenosha, WI) and a part-time professional magician. He borrows hypotheses and techniques from magic to study attention and perception in the laboratory, and has authored both empirical and theoretical works on the interface of science and magic.

A leader in this burgeoning field, he was a founding member of the Science of Magic Association and frequently appears in national and international media. Most recently, his work was featured on an episode of the CBC's *The Nature of Things* with David Suzuki devoted to the science of magic. He regularly teaches a college course devoted to the cognitive science of magic.

This program will take place online, via Zoom.. Current paid CDHS members will receive an invite to the meeting via e mail. ANY ONE WHO IS NOT A CURRENT PAID MEMBER of CDHS CAN ATTEND.

Send an e-mail request to: webmaster@humanistsociety.org , several days prior, or log onto our Meetup page: <https://www.meetup.com/Capital-District-Humanist-Society/> . Click on Join, then on Attend, and use the RSVP function and the link will be available to you.



Executive Council elections are coming up and to be on the lookout for the ballots in September .



The Capital District Humanist Society provides a supportive community for exchanging ideas, heightening our knowledge of the world and ourselves, fostering moral and ethical growth, and promoting the principles of secular humanism. CDHS is a member organization for people with humanist values. Our values include commitment to free inquiry, rational thought, life-long education, democracy, social concern, and fellowship.

Capital District Humanist Society, Inc.

Established 1986

Find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/CapitalDistrictHumanistSociety>



CDHS is affiliated with:

The American Humanist Association (AHA)

Center for Inquiry (CSI)

Humanists International (HI)

The Secular Coalition for America (SCA)

Review of our July Speaker's Presentation

Adam Seyhan is a retired engineer whose presentation concerned the so-called climate change hoax. He started by posing the question, are we having more storms, heat waves, floods, and suchlike disasters?

The answer is yes. In 2019 we saw vast fires in Australia, Siberia, the Amazon (80,000 fires there) and of course California. This included the three largest fires ever. Floods plagued the U.S. (affecting 14 million people), Iran, Australia, Pakistan, the U.K., and Venice. Japan had flooding and a heat wave; one in India saw temperatures exceeding 120 degrees. Cyclone Idai in Southeast Africa was deemed the deadliest ever in the Southern Hemisphere. That was 2019. Good thing 2020 was problem-free. Seyhan also charted the annual incidence of U.S. storms costing over \$1 billion in damage, rising from 2.9 to 22 over four decades. While typically no individual event can be attributed to global warming, temperatures are clearly rising (Seyhan said by nearly a degree in the last forty years) and that affects how the planet behaves. Dry regions get dryer and the wet get wetter. Warmer air causes more evaporation from the oceans, creating more rain, but sea levels are not sinking; to the contrary, melting ice raises them.

Arctic ice has fallen by a third. Seyhan focused on the Thwaites Glacier in Antarctica, one of a bunch, but called the "Doomsday Glacier" because that one alone could raise sea levels by 7-10 feet. Antarctica has 90% of the planet's ice; melt all of it and the rise could be 200 feet. A lot of people would need to find alternate accommodations. Is the climate change we're seeing cyclical? Unfortunately, not. Solar activity is on an 11-year cycle, but right now we're at a minimum, the peak expected in mid-2025. Global warming is caused mainly by the greenhouse effect: certain gases in the atmosphere blocking the escape of the heat from solar radiation. The main concern is Carbon Dioxide, but methane's warming effect is actually at least 28 times greater over 100 years. Cows emit a lot of methane; that could be significantly reduced by tweaking their diets.

Seyhan noted that 57% of greenhouse gases are emitted by just four countries: China, America, Russia, and India. [Well, pretty big countries.] America's contribution is 15%, but our emissions peaked in 2007 and have been dropping since. However, Seyhan noted, they still equate to 1.5 million truckloads of coal daily. Eating a pound of chicken entails 4.57 pounds of carbon dioxide; one hour on a flight 200 pounds. He said we need to get down to zero emissions by 2050 to avoid climate disaster.

Is there any hope? Seyhan pointed to a recent International Energy Agency report, and a book by Bill Gates, showing how it can be done. A global climate conference is scheduled for September in Scotland (weather allowing). Seyhan presented a long list of proposals. Topping it is a worldwide carbon tax; along with punishments for nations not on board. He said we must ban use of fossil fuels, and then even natural gas. Nuclear power would be part of the replacement. Also, hydrogen as fuel.

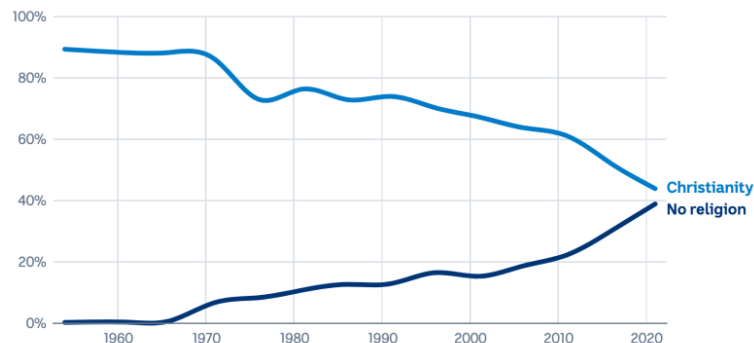
What can an individual do? Reduce waste, Seyhan said; use electric cars and heat pumps, LED lighting, solar panels; eat less meat; pressure politicians.

Unspoken was the fact that if God wanted lower temperatures, he'd reduce them.

Review by Frank Robinson

'No religion' is the second-largest faith group in Australia, census shows

Australians' religion



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

Christianity is still Australia's most popular religion, but it no longer represents the majority of Australians

The percentage of Australians who have no religious affiliation has jumped from 30.1% in 2016 to an astonishing 38.9% in 2021, marking a rapid shift away from organized religion. That's one of the major results released by Australia's Bureau of Statistics (ABS), which conducts a census every five years and began releasing 2021 Census data today.

The ABS found that the number of people professing "No religion" is nearly the same as the number professing Christianity (43.9%). It's a far cry from a decade ago in 2011, when the "No religion" crowd represented a mere 22.3% of the country.

To put the results another way, while Christianity is still the most popular religion in Australia, for the first time ever, it no longer represents the majority of Australians. Christianity was the stated religion of about 90 per cent of Australians until 1966, when its dominance began to wane. The ABS says migration has affected the trends since, though much of the change is due to the growth of atheist and secular beliefs. The fastest-growing religions, according to the latest census, are Hinduism (2.7 per cent of the population) and Islam (3.2 per cent), though these worshippers remain small minorities.

There are 11,148,814 Christians in the country, followed by 9,886,957 who claim "No religion." The difference is even more stark for younger Australians. 46% of Millennials have no religion, compared to 30% of Baby Boomers.

by Hemant Mehta in [onlysky.media](https://www.onlysky.media) (6/28/22)

2022 SEPTEMBER						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

Looking ahead.... September 11th at 1 PM...

Everyone Belongs Outside: A Prescription for Nature Across the Lifespan

We all feel it, whether looking outside, at a beach, in a field, or on a mountain top – the place of parks and nature in the cycles of life is universally valued. In this presentation Dr. Sonya Jakubec will share discoveries and lessons learned from collaborative, community-engaged research and parks programming for people experiencing cancer, disability, dementia, palliative care, as well as for those living with grief and loss.

She will highlight the background evidence promoting parks and parks prescribing as an intervention held within both “Healthy Parks-Healthy People” and “Social Prescribing” movements. Working in collaboration across health and parks sectors also points the way for important practical applications, a wealth of ideas for implementing parks and nature connections, and recommendations for health and nature innovations.

Through rich research discoveries, practical examples, images and stories, Sonya will shine the light on ways to fill your own prescription for parks and nature across the lifespan; after all, everyone belongs outside!

Sonya L. Jakubec, RN, BHScN, MN, PhD is a community mental health nurse and researcher based in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. She studies the interconnection of supportive environments and wellbeing across the lifespan, concentrating on community and public health approaches. Her current work examines the health and wellbeing benefits of inclusion in parks for people of all abilities and ages – including palliative and grief care, as well as ecological grief. She has contributed to several textbooks, book chapters, peer reviewed journal and professional articles, media interviews and opinion pieces, as well as research snapshots and documentary films in the public domain.



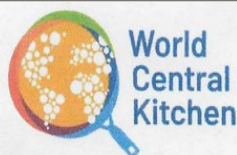
CDHS Executive Committee Votes to Contribute Funds to Help Feed the Ukrainian Victims of Russian Aggression

The World Center Kitchen began serving hot meals within hours of the initial Russian invasion of Ukraine and quickly set up kitchens at the eight border crossings with Poland.

Their ‘Chefs for Ukraine’ rapidly started distributing nourishing and fresh meals across the region. In addition to their field kitchens, WCK is working with local restaurants, caterers, and food trucks to provide meals at border crossings, reception centers, shelters and other locations along the journey of the displaced. So far, WCK has prepared and distributed more than 2 million meals.

In recognition of the vital service provided by WCK volunteers and in response to the pressing need in Ukraine, the CDHS Executive Committee voted to donate \$3005 to the cause. Part of the letter of acknowledgement from WCK is shown here.

Why \$3005? Those were the funds in our Humanitarian Gift Fund.



June 6, 2022

Capitol District Humanist Society Inc.
P.O. Box 11209
Loudonville, NY 12211

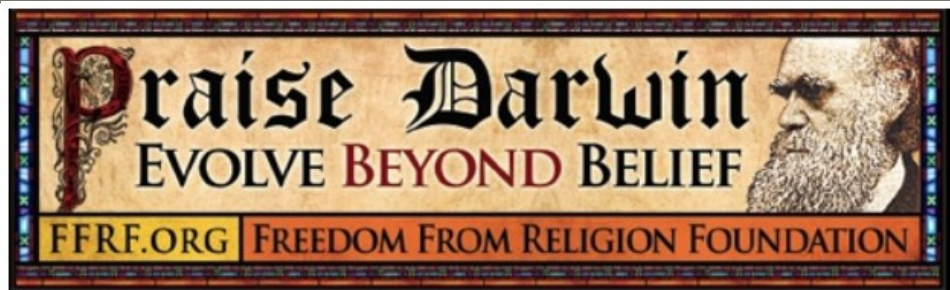
Re: Thank you for your donation!

Dear Friend,

On behalf of the entire World Central Kitchen team, I want to thank you for your donation of **\$3,005.00** made on **4/11/2022** in support of our response to the crisis in and around Ukraine. No goods or services were received in exchange for this philanthropic contribution.

2-107

200 Massachusetts Ave NW, 7th Floor
Washington, DC 20001



Do you have a child or grandchild who would like to take a stab at this contest? Please pass the information on.

Americans United for Separation of Church and State has just launched their 2022 Student Essay Contest with a first prize of \$1,500.

This year's contest focuses on recent Supreme Court decisions and their impact on the law and on peoples' lives. Our essay contest encourages high school students to reflect on why religious freedom and church-state separation are important to them and their communities. **AU invites high school students who graduate(d) in 2022, 2023, or 2024** to submit a piece of original writing that responds to the topic and meets the criteria below.



The Topic: How does one or more of the following Supreme Court decisions relate to church-state separation and religious freedom, and how will it affect people and communities in the United States?

Kennedy v. Bremerton School District

Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization

Carson v. Makin

In *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District*, the Supreme Court ruled against the Bremerton School District, which was trying to protect public high school students from a coach who violated their religious freedom by pressuring them to join his public prayers at the 50-yard line at public high school football games. In *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, the Court abolished the constitutional right to abortion. And the decision in *Carson v. Makin* forces taxpayers to fund religious education. **Submissions must be received no later than 11:59PM PT on Monday, September 19.**

CRITERIA

Essay length should be between 750 and 1,000 words. Writing should be clear, creative, and proofread; demonstrate genuine grappling with the topic; and be the student's original writing. Submissions should make persuasive arguments supported by specific examples and/or cited sources where appropriate. The strongest essays will weave together personal experience/perspective and well-researched information on current laws and events to make a persuasive argument. Essays can reference historical events, legal cases, U.S. history, primary sources, personal experience, and other sources. Students may use their preferred citation or footnote style, but formatting options will be limited in the submission form, and submissions will not be judged on formatting.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE

The contest is open to members of high school classes of 2022, 2023, and 2024 in the United States including the fifty states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories.

HOW TO SUBMIT: Contact Americans United for Separation of Church and State for an entry form.

Christian nationalism on the rise in some GOP campaigns

The victory party took on the feel of an evangelical worship service after Doug Mastriano won Pennsylvania's Republican gubernatorial primary this month. As a Christian singer led the crowd in song, some raised their arms toward the heavens in praise.

Mastriano opened his remarks by evoking Scripture: "God uses the foolish to confound the wise." He claimed Pennsylvanians' freedom would be "snatched away" if his Democratic opponent wins in November, and cast the election in starkly religious terms with another biblical reference: "Let's choose this day to serve the Lord."

Mastriano, a state senator and retired Army colonel, has not only made faith central to his personal story but has woven conservative Christian beliefs and symbols into the campaign — becoming the most prominent example this election cycle of what some observers call a surge of Christian nationalism among Republican candidates.


Mastriano — who has ignored repeated requests for comment from The Associated Press, including through his campaign last week — has rejected the "Christian nationalist" label in the past. In fact, few if any prominent candidates use the label. Some say it's a pejorative and insist everyone has a right to draw on their faith and values to try to influence public policy. But scholars generally define Christian nationalism as going beyond policy debates and championing a fusion of American and Christian values, symbols and identity.

Christian nationalism, they say, is often accompanied by a belief that God has destined America, like the biblical Israel, for a special role in history, and that it will receive divine blessing or judgment depending on its obedience.

That often overlaps with the conservative Christian political agenda, including opposition to abortion, same-sex marriage and transgender rights. Researchers say Christian nationalism is often also associated with mistrust of immigrants and Muslims. Many Christian nationalists see former President Donald Trump as a champion despite his crude sexual boasts and lack of public piety.


by Peter Smith and Deepa Bharath - apnews.com (05/29/2022)





In time for Independence Day, the **Freedom From Religion Foundation** launched a nationwide “We’re Atheist & We Vote” billboard campaign. Here are Mira and Dave Peck on Albany’s sign.

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Appointed Positions	
Hospitality	Mira Peck
Room Arrangements	Frank Robinson



Walgreens
@Walgreens · Follow

Our policy allows pharmacists to step away from filling a prescription for which they have a moral objection. At the same time, they are also required to refer the prescription to another pharmacist or manager on duty to meet the patient's needs in a timely manner.

9:55 PM · Jun 24, 2018

Walgreens boycott called after employees refuse to sell contraception due to religious beliefs

So here’s what we know: Thanks to the ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court reversing *Roe v. Wade*, hundreds of thousands of Americans are no longer allowed to have abortions in nearly a dozen states, and people who don’t want to get pregnant may have to because some pharmacist at

Walgreens has a “moral objection” to selling contraception. I’m sorry, but are you fucking kidding me?

NJ.com reports that 21-year-old customer Abigail Martin received a text from her local Walgreens pharmacy telling her she had no refills left on her birth control prescription. When she marched into the store to complain, Martin says a Walgreens employee, who was “wearing two crosses,” told her that she would have to contact her doctor.

“I said, ‘You won’t refill it, or you can’t refill it?’” Martin said. Martin called her doctor, who told her she had four refills on the prescription. The doctor’s office called Walgreens. Then, Martin received two more texts, one saying the medicine was delayed and another alleging it was “out of stock.”

Finally, Martin found a pharmacist willing to refill her birth control. But, according to Martin, the pharmacist asked her to identify the person who initially refused to order the refill. Martin described the employee and the pharmacist replied, “I know exactly who that is, and we’ve been having this problem for the last two weeks.”

Walgreens posted the company’s policy on Twitter back in 2018, which allows pharmacists the right to “step away” from filling “a prescription for which they have a moral objection.” The statement also states that the pharmacist is “required to refer the prescription to another pharmacist or manager on duty to meet the patient’s needs.”

But it seems cases such as Martin’s are beginning to ramp up in a post-*Roe* world. Nate Pentz and his wife Jess were in a Walgreens in Hayward, Wisconsin, on July 3 when they were refused condoms by a cashier. The employee told them he wouldn’t sell them the condoms because of his “faith.”

by Rebekah Sager at *dailykos.com* (04/19/2022)

The CDHS Book Club is continuing their reading of BEING YOU by Anil Seth.

“We’re all hallucinating all the time; when we agree about our hallucinations, we call it “reality”. ” ...



Interested in joining them? Contact Frank Robinson



CREATIONISTS NOW AGREE WITH THE SCIENTIFIC THEORY THAT THE DINOSAURS WERE PROBABLY WIPED OUT BY THE IMPACT OF A LARGE ASTEROID.

AUGUST SOCIAL



On Sunday, August 7th, from 12 to 4PM, our own Humanist Gardeners, Carol Quantock (a recent speaker on native plants) and Sherry Levine, will be giving tours of their native and perennial gardens. One boasts making the most of shade gardening, while the other is geared towards supporting nature and her magnificent wildlife. Keep in mind, Carol's garden is not handicapped friendly. Both gardeners find great joy and beauty in the slow art of gardening.

Their gardens are located in Clifton Park and Stillwater, with fewer than ten miles separating them. Bring a box lunch and folding chair... (those with mobility issues will have seating provided).

We'll provide cookies and drinks. Not a gardener? Come sit and enjoy the camaraderie. We'll have shade, and maybe even a few shady characters, but most importantly, good company.

Members only, please. RSVP by 8/4 to Sherry Levine (her email is in the directory). Rain date- Monday, August 8th.

Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene wants U.S. to 'embrace' Christian nationalism, but she's hardly alone



Aldous Pennyfarthing at www.dailykos.com/stories/2022/7/21/21

NOTE: Some readers may find some of the language that follows objectionable

Not all Christians are created equal. Take, for instance, devout Catholic Joe Biden versus self-described "Christian nationalist" Marjorie Taylor Greene. They're like apples and oranges. Or, more precisely, like apples and that one fruit that smells like diapers and feet.

To be fair, Christianity has had an enormous impact on the course of Western civilization—and, by extension, on American culture—but we are *not* a Christian nation. Indeed, Enlightenment philosophers like John Locke, as well as Native Americans in the Iroquois Confederacy, have had far more influence on the U.S. Constitution than Jesus or the Bible ever did.

So to call yourself a "Christian nationalist" is to essentially out yourself as un-American and pig ignorant. Enter Georgia Rep. Marge Greene, the universal answer to the eternal philosophical question "Oh, Jesus Pancake-Flippin' Christ, what the fuck is this now?"

GREENE: "I'm a Christian, I have no problem saying I'm a Christian nationalist. And I think that's an identity that we need to embrace because those are the policies that serve every single American, regardless of how they vote."

I'm sure Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, etc. will be delighted to know Marjorie Taylor Greene is hard at work building a Christian utopia just for them, but that's not really the point. We're a secular republic built on Enlightenment ideas and values, and Christian nationalism represents a sick perversion of our Constitution and traditions. So it's alarming the extent to which that label is being adopted these days—and not just by MTG. In fact, Christian nationalism is behind much of the rot currently eroding the foundations of our democracy—and it's pretty well out in the open now.

National Right to Life official: 10-year-old should have had baby

The story has sparked a national conversation over the consequences of the Supreme Court's decision to overturn Roe v. Wade and how far some states are willing to go to prohibit abortions.

The 10-year-old Ohio girl who crossed state lines to receive an abortion in Indiana should have carried her pregnancy to term and would be required to do so under a model law written for state legislatures considering more restrictive abortion measures, according to the general counsel for the National Right to Life.

Jim Bopp, an Indiana lawyer who authored the model legislation in advance of the Supreme Court's decision overturning *Roe v. Wade*, told POLITICO on Thursday that his law only provides exceptions when the pregnant person's life is in danger.

"She would have had the baby, and as many women who have had babies as a result of rape, we would hope that she would understand the reason and ultimately the benefit of having the child," Bopp said in a phone interview on Thursday.

The story of the 10-year old rape victim forced to leave her home state to terminate a pregnancy has sparked a national conversation over the consequences of the Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* and how far some states are willing to go to prohibit abortions.

The Columbus Dispatch reported on Wednesday that a 27-year-old man was charged with rape in connection with the case.

While Bopp's model legislation, which was released in advance of the Supreme Court's ruling late last month, encourages states to ban all abortions unless necessary to save the life of the pregnant person, it notes "it may be necessary in certain states to have additional exceptions, such as for a women pregnant as a result of rape or incest."

"Unless her life was at danger, there is no exception for rape," Bopp said. "The bill does propose exceptions for rape and incest, in my model, because that is a pro-life position, but it's not our ideal position. We don't think, as heartwrenching as those circumstances are, we don't think we should devalue the life of the baby because of the sins of the father." *politico.com (07/14/22)*

GOD ON TRIAL

The Sadness of God

Duncan Deaton

I was listening to an American Family Radio program one morning and heard one of the speakers declare that the biblical creator god (I will hereafter refer to him as "God" for simplicity) was saddened by every abortion. Based on knowledge of human reproduction, this seemed implausible. There are 140 million human births each year, and there are 73 million abortions performed globally (Guttmacher Institute data). However, God has designed human reproduction so that there are 220 million spontaneous/natural abortions each year.¹ If God was opposed to abortion (and omnipotent), I think he would have created a reproductive apparatus that would not produce three times more abortions than those produced by human abortionists. A human conceptus has only about a 30 percent chance of being born.²

Free Inquiry: August/September 2022

The Supreme Court rewarded religious schools. Maine lawmakers fought back

Last week, the Supreme Court ruled that taxpayers in Maine had to cover the costs of private religious education even when Christian indoctrination was front and center. It was a horrible decision loudly derided by church/state separation advocates. But state lawmakers may have found a way to nullify its effects. *Carson v. Makin* involved a voucher program that allowed students in rural parts of Maine to have access to free education, even if that meant attending a private school. The state already said it would cover private school tuition, even at church-run schools, as long as the education students received was secular in nature. But a lawsuit was filed by parents who wanted to send their kids to Christian schools that, among other things, promoted Creationism and discriminating against LGBTQ people in hiring. The Supreme Court essentially said the state was forbidden from discriminating against those schools on the basis of religion... which meant taxpayers would theoretically have to pay for religious indoctrination. As Justice Sonia Sotomayor put it in her dissent, "Today, the Court leads us to a place where separation of church and state becomes a constitutional violation."



Here's the amazing thing: Lawmakers in Maine anticipated this outcome a while back, and they recently took action to make the Supreme Court's decision toothless—at least in their state. Simply put, rather than stick with the previous law that banned money from going to explicitly religious schools, which was already in legal jeopardy, they passed a new law forbidding any taxpayer dollars from going to schools that discriminate against people on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. (More specifically, they expanded their anti-discrimination law to protect LGBTQ people—including at schools that are part of the voucher program.)

See? No religion involved. And yet it forces the Christian schools at the center of this legal battle, Temple Academy in Waterville and Bangor Christian Schools, to make a decision about what matters more: taxpayer-funded tuition dollars or faith-based bigotry?

Both schools already told the Supreme Court that bigotry was vital to their mission and that they would not alter how they operate in order to receive public funding.

by Hemant Mehta in *onlysky.media*

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(518) 533-2666 E-mail us at cdhs.albany@gmail.com
Visit us on the web at humanistsociety.net

The Capital District Humanist Society (CDHS) is an independent, non-profit (and non-prophet), non-partisan and strictly non-religious educational and social organization for those who share humanist values: commitment to education, rational and free inquiry, democracy, social concerns and fellowship. CDHS is affiliated with the four major humanist organizations - the American Humanist Association (AHA), the Council for Secular Humanism (CSH), the Secular Coalition for America (SCA) and the Humanists International (HI).

There are six types of CDHS member support: Individual, \$50/yr; Family, \$80/yr; Student \$25/yr; Sustaining, \$100/yr; Patron, \$150/yr; Lifetime Member, one contribution of \$1000 or more.

Members receive our publication, *The Humanist Monthly*, and vote by mail each September on the make-up of the governing Executive Council. Members are eligible for election to the Executive Council and may also serve as appointed officials. Members are welcome to attend Executive Council meetings.

The IRS recognizes CDHS as a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Therefore, all donations, both cash and materials with established "fair market value", qualify as charitable contributions for income tax purposes.

Donations are gratefully accepted to help speed our growth. CDHS is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization under the IRS Code. Financial disclosure information and our annual report are available upon request.

If you know of someone who may be interested in CDHS, please pass this newsletter along or give us the name; we will send a sample copy or two with no obligation.

We value your input. In the best humanist tradition, CDHS has no rigid picture of itself. We ask you to join us, not follow us. What activities and services would you like CDHS to provide its members? Send us your suggestions, questions, and comments.



CDHS

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How did you hear about the Humanist Society? _____

All this information will be included in our Directory, which is distributed to members only, unless you request otherwise by checking and signing here [] I do not want to be listed in the CDHS Member Directory _____

Levels of Member Support

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\$100

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