



# THE SEPARATIONIST

NOVEMBER 2013

## DAVID SILVERMAN: IN DEFENSE OF FIREBRAND ATHEISM SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2013, 4 PM, GAGE HALL, 4 ARCHDALE ST.

David Silverman is President of the American Atheists, a non-profit organization founded in 1963. Now in its fourth decade, American Atheists is dedicated to working for the civil rights of atheists, promoting separation of state and church, and providing information about atheism.

Mr. Silverman attended Brandeis University, where he completed his Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science while honing his debating skills with theists in numerous informal debates. Dave served as a professional inventor at Bell labs for eight years (74 issued patents) and a Marketing Director for Natural microsystems.

Dave has been an atheist since he was six years old. He became an activist in 1996 and soon became New Jersey State Director. He also founded the Alliance of Lucent and AT&T Atheists and Secularists, the first employee club of its kind. He was tapped to be the National Spokesperson in 2004, and then was named Vice President in 2008. The Board of Directors elected Dave

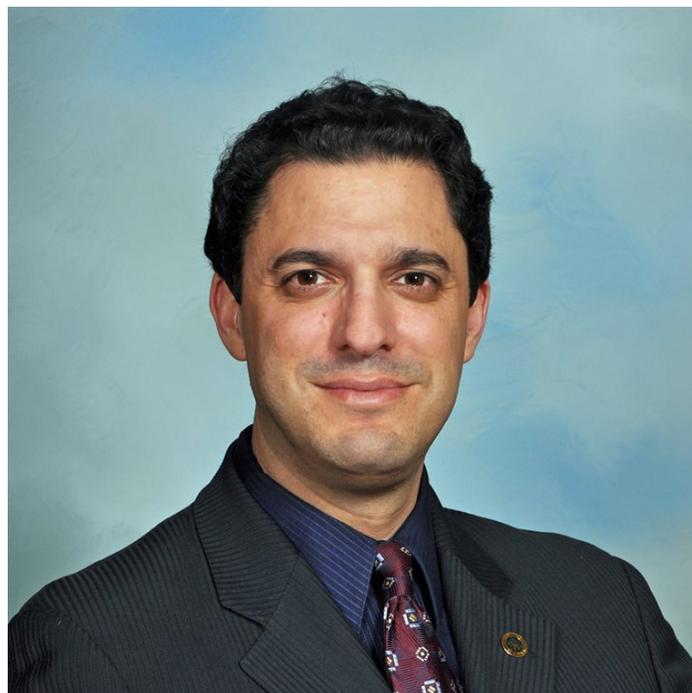
as President in September of 2010.

Mr. Silverman has appeared on most major news programs including The O'Reilly Factor (spawning the famous "WTF meme-face"), Scarborough Country, The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer, CNN's Paula Zahn NOW, Nick News, Hannity and Colmes, FOX and Friends, NPR's All Things Considered, and many more. Dave hosts the Atheist Viewpoint TV show with co-host Dennis Horvitz.

Refreshments: If your last name begins with the letters G-H, please consider bring a snack for the refreshments table. Suggested snack foods are cheese, crackers, fruit, granola bars, cookies, cake squares – anything that one can eat without need of a fork or spoon. The snack item

should be for about 8-12 people, which is the average number of servings in a typical container/bag. As always, SHL will supply the paper goods and beverages.

As always, there will be the opportunity to go to dinner at a nearby restaurant after the meeting.



### FIND US ONLINE! WE'RE (NEARLY) OMNIPRESENT!



<http://bit.ly/shlmeetup>



<http://bit.ly/shlhome>



<http://on.fb.me/shlFB> (main)

<http://on.fb.me/shlfamFB> (family)



<http://bit.ly/shlyoutube>



<http://bit.ly/shllist>



<http://yhoo.it/shlyahoo> (family)

**SUNDAY QUEST**  
**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2013, 4 PM**  
**GAGE HALL**  
**4 ARCHDALE ST, CHARLESTON**

**S**unday Quest, our new humanist youth program, will provide our children an opportunity to learn about humanism and all of its life-affirming ideals. Modeled after the Harvard Humanist Learning Lab and other secular Sunday schools, our goal with Sunday Quest is to create a safe space for children to explore their developing worldviews, think for themselves, connect with their community, and build a strong ethical foundation.

Sunday Quest will be geared toward children ages 5-12 years old. We request that parents drop their children off and attend the adult SHL meeting during the children's program. If space allows, children older than 12 years old may attend as program assistants and children younger than 5 years old may attend with a parent. The program will last approximately an hour to an hour and a half.

During this month's program, children will explore social rules and how we use them to interact with each other to make our community a better place. Kids will compare rules from religious traditions as well as come up with what they think are ideal rules for society. Additionally, we will give the kids an opportunity to put their ethics in action by introducing a community service opportunity. November 16-24 is National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week, so we will use that as a starting point to collect items for care packages for the homeless. We will collect items throughout the year and distribute at a later date.

We are pleased to offer our pilot program at zero cost to participants, but space is limited, so pre-registration is required. Please RSVP to [president@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:president@lowcountryhumanists.org).



**LIGHT THE NIGHT WALK/FUNDRAISER**  
**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2013, 5:30 PM**  
**MT. PLEASANT WATERFRONT PARK**

**I**n association with Camp Quest South Carolina, SHL is joining the Foundation Beyond Belief event "Light The Night" for our local walk here in Mount Pleasant.

Once again, Foundation Beyond Belief has formed an international fundraising walk team for The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's (LLS) Light The Night Walk in an effort to raise money to support LLS' efforts to find cures for blood cancers. Many ally organizations have already formed teams of fundraising walkers under the Foundation Beyond Belief umbrella. With your help, Foundation Beyond Belief raised \$430,000, the largest amount ever raised by a first year non-corporate team and the 4th largest amount raised by any team in the nation in 2012, including corporate teams! The Stiefel family has pledged to match the first \$250,000 the teams raise, so your contribution will go twice as far!

Last year, SHL raised \$3,700 which was doubled to \$7,400, making us the largest corporate team in the Charleston area! Let's do it again!

You can sign up by visiting <http://bit.ly/shl-cq-ltn>

All walks begin at 7:00pm, with registration beginning at 5:30pm and a Remembrance Ceremony at 6:45. Walks are 1-3 miles in distance. Walks are held rain or shine. In case of extreme weather, this site will be updated by 3:00pm the day of the walk with any cancellation information. Strollers are welcome, please no pets, skateboards, bicycles or skates.

Light The Night is an annual evening fundraising walk that raises funds to advance the LLS mission: Cure leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease and myeloma, and improve the quality of life of patients and their families.

Each walker is encouraged (but not required) to set a fundraising goal of \$100 or more. Every walker that raises \$100 or more will be considered a Champion For Cures and will receive an illuminated balloon, t-shirt and wristband for food and dinner at the walk.

Even if you can't join the walk itself, please consider making a donation, at <http://bit.ly/shl-cq-ltn> or <http://bit.ly/shlcommunity>.

Every little bit helps, so please donate what you can!

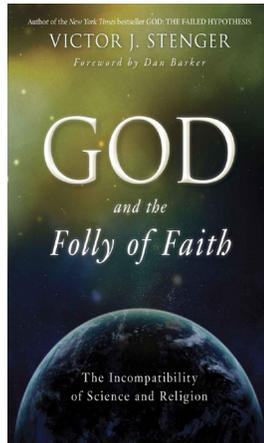
**BOOK GROUP**  
**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2013, 4 PM**  
**WEST ASHLEY BARNES & NOBLE**  
**1812 SAM RITTENBERG, CHARLESTON**

Victor Stenger's *God and the Folly of Faith* is a thorough and hard-hitting critique that is a must read for anyone interested in the interaction between religion and science.

It has become the prevalent view among sociologists, historians, and some theistic scientists that religion and science have never been in serious conflict. Some even claim that Christianity was responsible for the development of science. In a sweeping historical survey that begins with ancient Greek science and proceeds through the Renaissance and Enlightenment to contemporary advances in physics and cosmology, Stenger makes a convincing case that not only is this conclusion false, but Christianity actually held back the progress of science for one thousand years. It is significant, he notes, that the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century occurred only after the revolts against established ecclesiastic authorities in the Renaissance and Reformation opened up new avenues of thought.

On Sunday, November 24, SHL's book group will meet to discuss *God and the Folly of Faith: The Incompatibility of Science and Religion*.

As always, We'll meet at the West Ashley Barnes & Noble, located at 1812 Sam Rittenberg Blvd. Our discussion runs from 4 pm to 5:30 pm and we usually go out to dinner afterwards.



*When faith rules over facts, magical thinking becomes deeply ingrained and warps all areas of life. It produces a frame of mind in which concepts are formulated with deep passion but without the slightest attention paid to the evidence.*

[www.doctoroffdumb.com](http://www.doctoroffdumb.com)

**NATURAL HISTORY IN THE LOWCOUNTRY**  
**PART 2 OF 4: BIRD STUDY**  
**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2013, 1 PM & 3 PM**  
**CAW CAW INTERPRETIVE CENTER**  
**5200 SAVANNAH HWY, RAVENEL**

Led by Charleston County Parks and Recreations, kids will investigate various species of trees and plants and their roles in forest cycles.

Kids will investigate learn all about birds through a combination of activities with bird parts and artifacts, migration map study, and field observation. There will be two sessions, each 90 minutes in length. The 1 pm session is for pre-K and elementary kids. The 3 pm session is for middle and high school students. Cost is \$5 child.

To RSVP (required) email [president@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:president@lowcountryhumanists.org).

**CHARITY OF THE QUARTER**  
**CHARLESTON ANIMAL SOCIETY**

The Charleston Animal Society is our charity of the quarter for November and December. For 139 years, the mission of CAS has been the same—preventing cruelty to animals.

Every day, CAS combats cruelty by using innovative, science-based strategies including a large-scale spay/neuter program, a free roaming cat initiative, educational outreach programs that teach children to be humanitarians and a food bank for pets that helped 900 families last year. CAS also works with police, prosecutors and lawmakers to make sure animal cruelty laws are enforced and made stronger.

Recently, CAS launched No Kill Charleston 2015—the boldest animal welfare initiative ever undertaken in the Southeast. By thinking out of the box, using proven best practices from animal organizations across the nation, and implementing research-based strategies, CAS has moved from what is known as an Annual Live Release Rate of 34% in 2007 to over a 75% Annual Live Release Rate today, which is almost unheard of in the animal welfare world. Comparatively, other parts of the state realize low live release rates ranging from 10% to 30%.

Please help us support the mission of CAS by donating on our website (<http://bit.ly/shlcommunity>).

## IS ATHEISM WINNING THE CULTURE WAR? HERB SILVERMAN

**B**arking dogs chase passing cars that they never come close to touching, and I doubt they consider the ramifications of actually catching a vehicle. Cars, of course, ignore the dogs. Many atheists have long been barking at how our mainstream culture seems wrapped in religion, and most religious people have simply ignored the atheists. However, it appears that atheists are getting closer to “catching” the mainstream culture, and should consider strategies and ramifications.

Here I use the word “atheist” in a big-tent sort of way to include agnostics, humanists, secular humanists, free-thinkers, nontheists, anti-theists, skeptics, rationalists, naturalists, materialists, ignostics, apatheists, and more. If you don’t know what each of these words means, don’t worry. Even those who identify with such labels often disagree on their definitions. Parsing words might be a characteristic of folks engaged in the secular movement. My inclusive term “functional atheist” embodies those who live as if there are no personal, judging gods.

The Secular Coalition for America (of which I’m founder and president emeritus) includes 11 national, nontheistic member organizations. The members cooperate on the 95 percent they have in common instead of arguing about labels. We all agree there should be a wall between religion and government; that we should increase the visibility of, and respect for, nontheistic viewpoints; that we should encourage and help pave the way for atheists to come out of the closet; and that atheists deserve a place at the table of public opinion. How best to achieve our goals is not so clear.

Atheists have long been known primarily for criticizing religion and protesting the intrusion of religion into government. Such actions are often called for, especially when conservative religionists set a political agenda that affects those who don’t share their religious beliefs. We must confront and respond, and let the undecided judge who is more honest, reasonable, tolerant, and fair.

Nontheistic groups have formed welcoming commu-

nities, with a variety of activities for individuals and families. Some groups are primarily interested in lectures and book clubs, some in socializing, some in good works, some in protesting, some in political action, and some in all of the above. There are also many virtual atheist groups, who enjoy discussions even though they never meet.

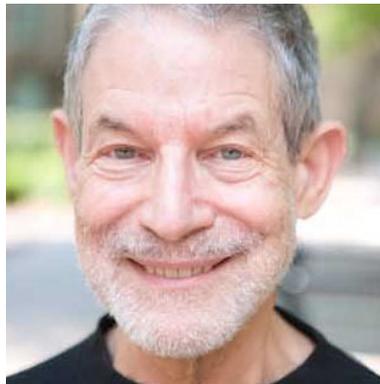
For many years, I’ve been encouraging atheists and humanists to organize and cooperate in order to change the culture. However, the movement has become larger than formal organizations alone, perhaps because of the increasing number of “nones,” those who don’t identify with any religion. According to a recent Pew Survey, this demographic has risen to 20 percent, and even higher among millennials.

They will probably not be joining atheist or humanist organizations in large numbers, and I’m fine with that. Even though I’m very interested in religion, part of me wishes I didn’t have to be. I’ve gone from religious believer to apathetic atheist and finally to activist atheist because of my concern that the religious right wants to move our country closer to theocratic rule.

Unlike the religious right, “nones” are generally accepting of full and equal rights for atheists, gays, women, and other marginalized groups. If young people continue to be more interested in how we treat others and what we do to make the world a better place, rather than equating morality with religion, then we will finally realize an America that values freedom of and freedom from religion.

Since we are evolving into a country where deeds are more important than creeds, I think atheists will one day be part of a respected mainstream in America, along with progressive religious allies. If that happens, I will be glad to see the Secular Coalition and its nontheistic partners go out of business and call it “mission accomplished.”

(See all of Herb’s *On Faith* posts at <http://wapo.st/herb-on-faith>)



## UPSTATE ATHEISTS BOUNCE BACK AFTER BEING BANNED HEMANT MEHTA THE FRIENDLY ATHEIST

Earlier this year, the Upstate Atheists from Spartanburg, South Carolina attempted to volunteer at the Spartanburg Soup Kitchen. Unfortunately, its director Lou Landrum denied their offer, saying atheists weren't welcome there. Landrum took things even further last week when she told the *Spartanburg Herald-Journal* that allowing atheists to help in her kitchen would be a "disservice to this community."

... Landrum, executive director of the Soup Kitchen, told the *Herald-Journal* she would resign from her job before she let atheists volunteer and be a "disservice to this community."

"This is a ministry to serve God" she said. "We stand on the principles of God. Do they (atheists) think that our guests are so ignorant that they don't know what an atheist is? Why are they targeting us? They don't give any money. I wouldn't want their money."

Despite the setback, the atheists pulled through for the people they were trying to help. On Saturday [October 26], they gave away over 300 care packages to the homeless, each package costing about \$15 and including things like gloves, toothpaste, hand sanitizer, lip balm, snacks, etc.

Landrum had said "They can have the devil there with them, but they better not come across the street." I don't see the devil in any of those pictures. Just kind, wonderful, godless people trying to help the people around them.

I also don't see a "No Christians Allowed" sign. And this is just the beginning.

Susan Bryker, the group's Social Media Director, tells me they'll be volunteering on November 16 at the Greer Soup Kitchen. Considering the GSK is "a part of Daily Bread Ministries," I think it's a safe assumption that this is also a Christian group, one that doesn't have a problem with non-religious help. (What say you to that, Landrum?) Sue added in an email, "[the Greer Soup Kitchen] even wrote to us during the recent media frenzy to tell us how much they look forward to us coming."

They'll also be returning to where they were today, across the street from the Spartanburg Soup Kitchen, to do another giveaway. Next time, they'll be handing out coats, gloves, blankets, tarps, and more.

And in December, they plan to provide gifts, including clothes and requested toys, to children in the Spartanburg foster care system.

In order to make that particular event successful, the Upstate Atheists could really use your donations. They more you give, the more they can give away. If you want to support what

they're doing, please consider chipping in at <http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/holiday-gifts-for-foster-children!> You'll be making the holidays that much better for those foster children.

What an admirable way to handle a shitty situation. A Christian showed the world that her faith prohibited her from doing the right thing while a group of atheists showed everyone that their lack of faith compels them to help other people.



# THE SEPARATIONIST

## THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SECULAR HUMANISTS OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

*Opinions expressed in *The Separationist* are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of SHL.*

*Please contact the editor with any questions or comments about this publication. Contributions of short articles, news items, letters to the editor or other information of interest to SHL members are always welcome.*

*Contact our editor, Matt Dean at [newsletter@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:newsletter@lowcountryhumanists.org).*

# THE SECULAR HUMANISTS OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

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## OUR OFFICERS

President: Amy Monsky

Vice President: Herb Silverman

Treasurer: Jason Gregory

Secretary: Laura Kasman

## JOIN SHL

SHL is a group of freethinkers who believe in the humanist philosophy. Members come primarily from the greater Charleston, South Carolina, area. SHL is affiliated with American Atheists, American Humanist Association, Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, Atheist Alliance International, Council for Secular Humanism, and the South Carolina Progressive Network. Annual tax-exempt membership fees are \$35 (individual) or \$50 (couple or family). Additional donations are always welcome. To join, visit our website at <http://bit.ly/joinshl>, and for more information about our activities, visit <http://bit.ly/shlevents>