



The Separationist



“Be careful what you ask for”

a talk by Mary Dellucci

4:00 PM /October 19, 2008

Gage Hall, 4 Archdale Street

Our October 2008 monthly meeting will feature guest speaker Mary Dellucci, chair of Lowcountry Council of Alternative Spiritual Traditions, who will educate us about Paganism.

This is not the first time that our meeting will feature a lecture from someone whose religious views differ from our own. In the past, we've had Christian ministers, a Muslim imam, a religious biology professor, and others. It is not only interesting and healthy for our members to learn about other viewpoints, but also important for us to maintain ties with the larger community.

Dellucci is used to speaking to curious audiences such as ours, since as spokesperson for the Council on Alternative Spiritual Traditions, she often speaks to churches and other non-Pagan social groups interested in learning more about Paganism.

Raised Catholic in Nyack, New York, Mary Dellucci was fond of reading the Bible, but found it difficult to believe due to the inconsistencies she perceived in it. Rather than the Trinity of her upbringing, she now believes in “the goddess”. She also seems to believe that after many years of persecution, she and fellow Pagans are ready to demand fair treatment and public acceptance. In a City Paper article by Will Moredock (Dec. 12,

2007), Dellucci was quoted as saying “We are your neighbors. We pump your gas, we clean your teeth, we teach your children. And this time we're staying.” In this regard, the goals of Dellucci's organization do sound very much like the goals of the SHL.

In addition to her role with the Council of Alternative Spiritual Traditions, Dellucci works as a solid waste accounting manager for Berkeley County.

Please join us on October 19th at 4PM in Gage Hall (4 Archdale Street) for a visit from Mary Dellucci and an opportunity to learn about the community of Pagans in Charleston.



Letters to the Editor of the P&C from SHL Members

Published in Post and Courier September 19, 2008

Letter writers who criticized Ken Burger's Sept. 11 article titled "Separation of church and sports" have two complaints.

First, they thought Coach Tommy Bowden was perfectly justified in mandating church attendance for his Clemson football players.

Second, they wondered how Mr. Burger could be so ungrateful to Christians whose prayers they credited for his speedy recovery from cancer.

Coaches and teachers at a public university have every right to speak about their religious beliefs as private citizens, but they have no right to proselytize students when representing their academic institution.

How would those who favor mandating athletes' attendance at a Christian church feel if, instead, a Muslim coach mandated attendance at a mosque? Or if I were to require my math students before exams at the College of Charleston to recite aloud, "There is no God"? Of course, I would never so abuse my professional authority with students and neither should football coaches.

Theologians have debated for centuries the effectiveness of intercessory prayer. If I believed in a loving god who answered prayers, I would be embarrassed to see football players praying for an opponent's potential game-winning field goal to be wide right.

I didn't pray for Ken Burger, and I take no credit for his recovery. I'm just pleased that he studied the evidence and made an informed decision about the right doctors and the most effective treatment for his particular case.

HERB SILVERMAN

Published in Post and Courier September 28, 2008

Franklin Graham, in his Sept. 21 article in The Post and Courier, wrote that he came to Charleston to bring "the Gospel (good news)." He asked, "Who in Charleston couldn't use some good news?"

Well, here is some really good news for those who may be searching. All you need to do is to love yourself. You don't need Franklin Graham, or Jesus or your parents, or anyone else in order to know that you're OK and that you are unique, that you are as worthy as anyone and deserve your right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

So, if you don't have this kind of self-esteem, then you need to discover why not. There are numerous sources of help to make such a discovery.

One of these is the Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry. Look up their Web site at www.lowcountryhumanists.org.

FRANKS S. HAY JR.

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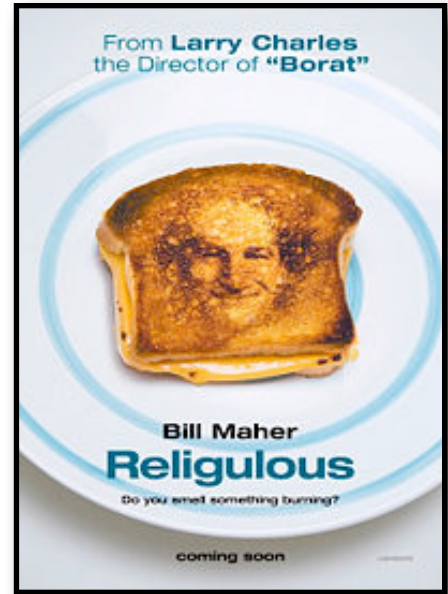
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at <http://lowcountryhumanists.org/SEPS/>*

SHL Movie Club News by Sue Edward

October's movie promises to be a real treat. We will be attending "Religulous", written by Bill Maher and directed by Larry Charles (who also directed Borat). *Variety's* Robert Koehler says this about the film:

Skeptics unite: You have nothing to lose but your inhibitions. That, in sum, is the underlying message of Bill Maher and Larry Charles' brilliant, incendiary "Religulous," in which comedian/talkshow host Maher inquires of the religious faithful and finds them severely wanting. By providing an example to other non-believers, Maher is, um, hell-bent on launching an even more aggressive conversation on the legitimacy of religion than he has on HBO's "Real Time With Bill Maher."

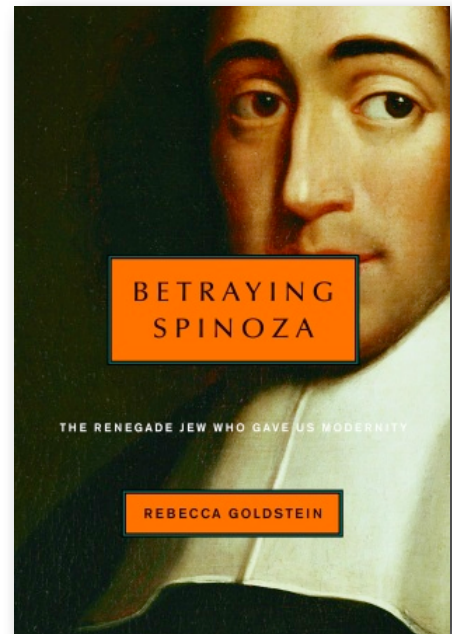
So join us on Saturday, October 4 at the Terrace Theater on Maybank Hwy (James Island). Time is TBA. After the movie, join us for dinner and a lively discussion of the film. I will be sending out an email reminder prior to the show with the time, so if you are not already on the movie club email list but would like to be, please contact me at bflosue@earthlink.net or 763-7304. See you there!



Humanist Book Discussion Group By Sharon Strong

Heresy. Excommunication. We are used to associating these words with freethinking Christians. But these terms also describe occurrences in the life of Baruch Spinoza, a 17th century Jew who was excommunicated from his community in Amsterdam for the heresy of casting doubt on the immortality of the soul and advocating the separation of church and state. Spinoza's advanced concept of a god who is immanent in the beauty, harmony, and mystery of the natural world would find resonance 300 years later with another great mind: Einstein said repeatedly that he was a believer in "Spinoza's God."

In "Betraying Spinoza: The Renegade Jew Who Gave Us Modernity," author and MacArthur Fellow Rebecca Goldstein provides us with a personal reflection on Spinoza's radical ideas in the context of his life. Herb Silverman will facilitate a discussion of this pithy biography at the October meeting of the book group, which will be held, as usual, on the fourth Sunday of the month (October 26) at the West Ashley Barnes and Noble bookstore (1812 Sam Rittenberg Blvd.), from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. Please join us!



Charity of the Quarter

The **Carolina Youth Development Center**, a home in North Charleston for children healing from abuse, neglect, abandonment and/or emotional disturbances, is our charity for September and October. This means that we are collecting money for them through the SHL. Please bring your donation in the form of a check (made out to the SHL with "CYDC" written in the memo spot) to the next meeting (or mail it to our treasurer). Once all of the donations have been collected, we



will write a single check to the CYDC for the total amount collected. This is a great way for you to help a needy charity, and also to spread the word in the Lowcountry that Humanists are good people.

But, we are not only helping the children at the CYDC by giving them monetary donations. We are also directly helping them to improve their conditions. On September 27th, a team of volunteers from the SHL helped disadvantaged girls living at the CYDC paint their dorm rooms. The rooms really needed repainting, but we did more than just solve the problem of old and worn out paint. Replacing the dreary colors they had with the bright and cheery ones that the girls selected really changed the whole atmosphere. The girls seemed very happy with the results, and (although tired after painting from 10 to 3 o'clock) we were glad to help, too.

SHL volunteers will be working in the near future, to help the residents at the CYDC or other deserving local charities. If you would like to join us, contact volunteer coordinator Nancy Worley (at right in photo) at our next meeting, or write to her at volunteers@lowcountryhumanists.org.

"Your Inner Fish: A Journey into the 3.5 Billion-Year History of the Human Body" with Neil H. Shubin **Charleston Music Hall / 7:30 PM / October 18, 2008**

University of Chicago paleontologist, Professor Neil Shubin, will be here in Charleston on Saturday October 18th giving a lecture which will trace features of the human body to their evolutionary origins in fish, worms and even flies. Professor Shubin has contributed to our understanding of this subject through his discovery and analysis of ancient fossils, including "Tiktaalik", the fish fossil found in the Canadian Arctic which made headlines around the world as "the fish with hands". Describing his book of the same title, Shubin says "*Your Inner Fish* is the story of these discoveries and the story of how this ancient past is a basic part of our lives today."

This lecture is part of a series of science lectures planned by producer Bill Bancroft (wlbancroftproductions.com) based in Lake Wylie, SC. He explains his motivations for this undertaking by saying "It is my hope that by educating the public on the newest and established scientific discoveries, people will be better able to make important decisions that will not only make their lives better, but make someone else's life have more meaning and perhaps relieve human suffering."

Tickets for this event are available at www.etix.com with ticket prices ranging from \$25 to \$65.



LifeRing Secular Recovery comes to Charleston

by Matt Dean

It's a commonplace that alcoholism is a disease, but in recovery or self-help settings, strangely enough, the alcoholic isn't always treated as if he or she is suffering from a disease. Imagine a hospital. People come in with all sorts of ailments and problems. Doctors and nurses give advice, write prescriptions, apply casts and bandages. If a diabetic seeks medical care, he or she will be given advice on diet and exercise, and possibly a prescription for some medication to help regulate blood sugar.

Those are examples of secular methods of healing. Most diabetics would likely be taken aback if a doctor prescribed prayer and a thoroughgoing inventory and confession of character defects, because prayer and confession are religious methods. As we know, most of life takes place in a secular context. Public transit, sporting events, grocery stores—and, of course, hospitals—are all secular organizations and contexts. Religion simply isn't a significant part of what people go there to do, and the topic of religious belief rarely, if ever, comes up.

And so it is with LifeRing, a recovery support group coming soon to Charleston. Theology, spirituality, and religion generally don't come up in our meetings, and religious debates are specifically discouraged. These are often loaded topics, and we aim to avoid any kind of debate that would distract or detract from recovery.

In our meetings:

- There are no prayers, no sermons, no readings from the Bible, no proselytizing for one faith or another.
- No one is asked to surrender to a Higher Power.
- We don't assert in any way, or even in so many words, that a belief in some god or other is a requirement for sobriety. All are welcomed as first-class members, regardless of faith or lack of it.



In our experience, religious or spiritual treatments are as relevant to alcoholism and as effective in treating alcoholics as they are in cases of diabetes, chronic fatigue syndrome, or sprained wrists—not very.

We rely on secular methods, and we recommend secular treatment approaches. We support each other by taking responsibility for our own recovery and by learning—and helping each other to learn—the skills necessary to live a long-term sober life.

The Unitarian Church in Charleston has graciously and generously offered a space for Charleston's first face-to-face LifeRing meeting. Beginning on October 3rd, we will meet every Friday at 7:00 pm.

For a map to our meeting space, and for more information concerning LifeRing, please visit our website at <http://liferingsc.info>, or call Matt Dean at (843) 277-0948.

**The Separationist
Newsletter of the
Secular Humanists
of the Lowcountry**

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SHL Calendar

SHL Movie Club: Religulous

October 4, 2008

Contact Sue Edward bflosue@earthlink.net to join SHL members at a movie and discussion over dinner, first weekend of every month.

SHL Monthly Meeting

October 18, 2008 at 7:30PM

Lecture by paleontologist Neil Shubin at Charleston Music Hall. See wlbancroftproductions.com for more info.

SHL Monthly Meeting

October 19, 2008 at 4PM

Featuring a lecture on Paganism by Mary Dellucci.

SHL Book Discussion Group

October 26, 2008 at 4PM

Barnes and Noble on Sam Rittenberg Blvd in West Ashley.

Trash Pick-up

November 15, 2008

(For those who want to plan ahead)

Join the SHL:

The Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry (SHL) is a group of free-thinkers who believe in the humanist philosophy. Members come primarily from the Charleston, SC area. The 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 SC Progressive Network.

Annual tax-exempt membership fees are \$24 (individual) or \$36 (couple or family); additional donations are always welcome. Members receive this newsletter and can participate in activities planned for the Lowcountry. For more information consult our Webpage at:

<http://lowcountryhumanists.org>

Contribute

Please contact the editors 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 appreciated. Write to us at newsletter@lowcountryhumanists.org or use the contact information at the bottom of page 2.