

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Lisa Ridge, NJHN President

NJHN has been quite active in the past three months and we've undergone significant changes. As many of you may already know, Harley Brown has stepped down as President, a position he held since NJHN's formation. An almost wholly new slate of officers was elected at our Organizational Board Meeting in July, and we have opened a more centrally located Post Office box in Somerville. Brad Holcombe has enthusiastically taken over the duties of producing THE NJHN BULLETIN and this issue showcases his professional design.

Our membership continues to grow, as has interest in Humanist activities around the state. There is interest in forming a group in the Red Bank area, Meetups (www.meetup.com) are organizing in several cities for Humanists, Atheists and those active in the issue of Separation of Church and State, and I've heard from non-theists from as far as Atlantic City who are looking for Humanist events in their area.

Now is the time to build on these successes. Our August 27th showing of the film Scout's Honor was an example of expanding our interaction with groups who share Humanist ethics and ideals. Joe Fox, our new Program Chair, is reaching out to more dynamic speakers on diverse topics. Upcoming meetings will feature two nationally-known speakers: Beth Lamont of the Humanist Society of Metropolitan New York, currently serving as the American Humanist Association's NGO representative to the United Nations, and reproductive freedom advocate Bill Baird of the Pro Choice League. Now in its third successful year, HumanLight, founded by NJHN members Joe Fox and Gary Brill, will be celebrated around the U.S. and internationally in December. Looking ahead to 2004, in January we will explore the

political and social consequences of putting the Affirmations of Humanism into action with speaker Neil Murphy, and August will mark the tenth anniversary of the New Jersey Humanist Network. Plans for a celebration of this event are getting underway and will be announced in a future issue.

My plan for the future includes organizing more social and family-oriented activities, increasing recognition of Humanist Calendar events, and establishing funding for Camp Quest scholarships. An energetic Board of Directors has committed their collective talents and desire to build on NJHN's strengths: genuine appreciation for our Humanist community, a unique mix of youthful exuberance and historical perspective, and dedication to lifelong learning and understanding. I'm excited by the possibilities of this next year's journey and I hope you will support our efforts in whatever way you choose.

If you'd like to get more involved, please contact me. I'd love to hear your comments and suggestions!

*Lisa Ridge, President
New Jersey Humanist Network
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EVENT SCHEDULE

All general meetings are held at the Bridgewater Library, 7pm, on the last Wednesday of the month, unless otherwise noted. Details on the website, www.njhn.org/schedule.html.

October General Meeting

*Wednesday, October 22, 7:00PM
Bridgewater Library*

Beth Lamont discusses her role as the NGO representative to the UN for the AHA, Humanist Philosophy and the various Manifestos and the life of her husband, noted Humanist Corliss Lamont.

Adopt-a-Highway Cleanup

*Sunday, November 2, 10:00AM
Route 31, Washington, New Jersey*

Call Harley Brown for info and rain date (908) 689-2813.

Red Bank Humanists

*Sunday, November 9, 11:00AM
10 Bridge Avenue (in the Galleria) Red Bank, NJ 07701*

Inaugural Meeting.

November General Meeting

*Wednesday, November 12, 7:00PM
Bridgewater Library*

Bill Baird, founder of the Pro Choice League (www.prochoiceleague.com), will be the speak on the current threats to reproductive freedom. March 22, 2002 marked the 30th anniversary of Baird v. Eisenstadt and the national legalization of birth control. Note that this meeting is not on the usual last Wednesday of the month, due to the Thanksgiving Holiday.

HumanLight

*December 21, 12:00 noon.
The Hilton Parsippany*

The third annual celebration of Humanism. Reservations are required. Directions at NJHN.org. Note that this celebration replaces the normal monthly NJHN meeting. See HumanLight.org for details.

EDITOR'S VIEW

Bradford Holcombe, Editor

Welcome to the new NJHN BULLETIN. This issue marks the passing of the torch from the previous Editor, Linda Kieseling, to me, Brad Holcombe. Linda will stay on as Contributing Editor, so she can concentrate on writing features, and can pass on the computer issues to me. I would like to thank Linda for her past efforts, and look forward to working with her in the future to further expand the NJHN BULLETIN.

The most obvious change is the layout. We have abandoned Microsoft Word for professional layout software. The new layout is much slicker than what Word is capable of, but, more importantly, the look better represents NJHN's strength as an organization. We have been around for ten years, and are a vibrant and growing community, and we need a bulletin that reflects these qualities. The new layout also allows us to put in much more content in a smaller space. All this printing and mailing costs money, and we aim to get the most out of our budget.

Also, we have changed from a strictly organization focus, to a community focus. This means that the bulletin will now add to the activities of NJHN, rather than just reporting on them. Look for articles, columns and features that go beyond what you can get by attending NJHN meetings and activities.

This bulletin goes out, free of charge, to five times the number of people who attend meetings regularly. So, we hope to give them the opportunity to share in the NJHN community, even if they cannot attend meetings for reasons of distance, schedule conflicts, or whatever. The new look gives them an opportunity to contribute articles or letters, and to share in some of the same NJHN experiences as those who can make it to the meetings and activities.

There are many more ideas I would like to implement, and they, hopefully, will be staged in the near future. So, look for many new things in the coming months. I expect that you might have some ideas of your own, once you see where we are headed. By all means, let me know your thoughts. I will be using this column to relate my own thoughts, and I will gladly field responses to them. Or, maybe you have ideas for articles. Please let me know how I can help, and we'll work together to get it done.

Finally, I look forward to my role as Editor, and I hope to make a significant contribution to NJHN in that role. My wife, Tamara Mount, and I have come to rely on the community that NJHN provides. It is a great comfort to us to have a group of like-minded people around when we need support or need to vent our anger at the religious influences in our lives. We also think that it is crucial to show our two children that there are many others out there who believe in the principles of Humanism, regardless of the messages they get from the non-Humanist world. So, I have a lot to give back to NJHN in particular and Humanism in general, and I hope to do some of that through editing this bulletin. Please help me to accomplish that. Thanks.

Bradford Holcombe

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THE NJHN BULLETIN

Volume one, number one
October 2003

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THE NJHN BULLETIN is a bi-monthly newsletter of the New Jersey Humanist Network (NJHN), published on the first day of January, March, May, July, September, and November.

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Contributing Ed.: Linda Kieseling

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We encourage the submission of articles, suggestions, letters to the editor and corrections. Submissions must be received one month before publication. Content may be edited for length. Unless otherwise specified, all submissions become property of NJHN and may be reproduced in part or in full in THE NJHN BULLETIN.

We invite anyone with a business or service to advertise in THE NJHN BULLETIN. Rates are \$10 per half-column. Send all copy and artwork to the contact above. Include a contact name and phone number or email address. We reserve the right to refuse any advertisement.

NJHN BOARD ACTIVITIES

Bradford Holcombe, Editor and Tim Ridge, NJHN Board Member

The NJHN Board met on Wednesday, July 16. They elected a new set of officers, and took the historic step of electing a new President, Lisa Ridge, to replace Harley Brown, founder of NJHN and President for the last nine years. Joe Fox is the new Vice President, Wanda Shiarappa is the new Secretary, and Jack Walsh is continuing as Treasurer. All elections are to one-year terms. This was the first meeting that included the three new board members elected at the June general meeting. The new members are Wanda Shiarappa, Lisa Ridge and Bradford Holcombe. They replace Gary Brill, Arnie Sokolow and Katy Fischer.

Harley Brown presented the NJHN Annual Report, which included a list of accomplishments, a summary of events, and a review of the budget for the last year. NJHN continues to show strong growth with a 20% increase in paid memberships, and a 10% increase in the mailing list.

There were also reports given from various committees including Membership, Publicity, Program and Fund Raising.

Actions included creating a committee to work on a gift subscription to the Bridgewater library, changes to the NJHN dues

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CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

THE NJHN BULLETIN publishes articles, book reviews, letters, and editorials from NJHN members, as well as from outside sources. If you have something to say, we will gladly print anything responsible and relevant to Humanism or NJHN. We will help you through all stages of the process. Submissions should be, at most, around one to two typewritten pages, and should be submitted one month before the issue in which they should appear. Even if you would just like to see something, but don't necessarily want to write it yourself, we would like to hear what you have to say. Please contact Bradford Holcombe or Linda Kieseling at any NJHN meeting, or talk to us through email at bulletin@NJHN.org.

Thanks,
Bradford Holcombe.
Editor, THE NJHN BULLETIN

structure, and moving the NJHN mailing address to a place closer to the meetings. The board felt that representing the group as based in Washington, NJ was misleading, and discouraging to new members who might live much closer to Bridgewater. The membership dues structure was also changed to include a Limited Means category and to raise the Family membership price.

The NJHN Board met again on October 15. Lisa Ridge reported increased interest in Humanism around the state. Joe Fox spoke about the progress being made on HumanLight, including publicity and a greater NJHN presence at the event.

Details were discussed regarding a Composer's Commission for a Humanist song to be performed by the Lehigh Valley Gay Men's Chorus in 2004, and sponsorship of New Jersey children to attend Camp Quest in the summer of 2004.

The board of directors unanimously voted to support Red Bank Humanists' proposal to formally affiliate with NJHN. A committee was appointed to finalize the details. To begin, we will publicize RBH activities and provide organizational support.

The tenth anniversary gala is tentatively scheduled for Friday, August 13, 2004. A membership directory is in the planning stage. NJHN merchandise will be available for sale at future program meetings.

ODDS AND ENDS

- The Laramie Project is a stage play about the transcript of interviews with the citizens of Laramie, Wyoming on the torture and death of Matthew Sheppard. Dates are Friday and Saturday, Oct. 17 and 18, curtain time 8PM. Sunday Oct. 19, curtain at 7 PM. Also, Friday and Saturday, Oct. 24, and 25, curtain time 8 PM, and Sunday Oct. 26, curtain time 7 PM. Tickets are \$10.00. Northlandz Theatre, Flemington N.J. For more information call the theatre at (908) 806-2080, or email at Laramie@HunterdonDiversity.org.

- Sara Brown would like to get a discussion group going at her home. If you would be interested in joining the group call her at (908) 735-9627 or e-mail at slbrown1@rcn.com

- The funding drive to finance the making of the film *The Heart of the Beholder* through personal contributions has failed to reach their \$500,000 target by the allotted date (they did get \$437,681.25 by 31AUG2003), and so all contributions have been returned. The makers have changed their approach and are now working on securing the funding through personal loans instead (pledges stand at \$256,125 as of 15OCT2003). The makers of the movie discuss their experience and their future plans at www.Beholder.com.

PROFILE: HARLEY BROWN

Linda Kieseling, Contributing Editor

This article is the first in a series of interviews with long-term or prominent members of NJHN. This interview is with Harley Brown, founder of NJHN.

NJHNB: Tell us something about your early years and how they impacted your belief in humanism.

HB: I was born in Bronxville, NY and my first home was in Ardsley. I lived there until I was 6 years old and then we moved to Scarsdale NY. I have two sisters and one brother. When I first questioned belief in God around age 8, no one really tried to change my mind. My grandmother had tried to get my parents to send us all to Sunday school, but this was a failure in regards to me. I always viewed the Bible stories as fiction. My father taught physics at City College of NY and he was very patient with my endless "Why" questions. I was taught humanist values by my parents who definitely had a Humanist philosophy of life. They did not attend church, but they never admitted to me whether they believed in God or not. My mother was very anti-Catholic as she blamed the loss of her privileged childhood in Austria and subsequent move to America on the Church. My mother's sister, Aunt Netta, made a lifelong quest to try to Christianize me, but, of course, she failed. Ironically, the only two people who took care of her in her declining years were both Atheists. I finally realized that I was a Humanist when I read a book by Corliss Lamont on the subject.

NJHNB: What is your educational background?

HB: I went to Edgemont High School and then to Cornell University where I majored in Anthropology. I attended Syracuse University and got an MA for teaching secondary schools. Later I worked toward a doctorate at Rutgers, but decided not to do the required residency and thesis, though I completed my course work. I was drafted into the Army

during the Vietnam War, fortunately I was sent to South Korea.

NJHNB: What was your goal when you established the NJHN?

HB: I had a number of goals in establishing NJHN. As a child I found atheism so obvious that I thought it was just a matter of time before everyone saw the light. I was always amazed when educated people were not atheists and didn't get my well-reasoned arguments. In the Reagan years it was becoming obvious that America was falling backwards into greater religiosity. I decided that it was the fault of us Atheists and Secular Humanists for being so quiet. Dare I say it? I really want NJHN to not just join together existing secular humanists in a community, I want that community to be part of a movement that shakes up the religious stranglehold on American culture and helps move our culture to a more reason- and science-based society. I realize that first we need to get our act together, but that is my not-so-hidden agenda.

NJHNB: What do you see as the future of humanism generally and the NJHN specifically?

HB: I think that Atheism/Humanism is so obviously the best choice for a philosophy for life, that eventually they have to prevail. I don't know when this will happen, but I would like to think that I helped speed it up, and certainly helped keep a finger in the dike against this present religious flood. When the pendulum swings the other way, we need to be ready to move things our way. That is the job of the NJHN, CFI and other groups. We need to lay the foundations for a humanist society in the future. In the meantime each of us can promote Humanism by being Humanists.

NJHNB: What other Humanist/Atheist organizations are you a member of currently, or have been in the past?

HB: I presently am a member of the Council for Secular Humanism, the American Humanist Association, the Freedom from Religion Foundation, and

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American Atheists. I was a member of Atheists United, which I liked but it seemed redundant to belong to so many groups.

NJHNB: What do you feel is your role in the NJHN organization?

HB: Now that I am no longer the President, I will try to allow others to take over. However, I will be there to be sure that the group doesn't fall apart should problems arise. I will also try to be sure that we keep moving to accomplish the goals that we first set out to do in our bylaws.

NJHNB: How can we promote Humanism in our community?

HB: Each of us promotes Humanism by being good citizens and role models and letting others know that we are not religious. A positive role model will do more than the skirmishes over the 10 Commandments and school prayer in changing peoples' minds.



We believe in the fullest realization of the best and noblest that we are capable of as human beings.

*from the Affirmations of Humanism
<http://www.secularhumanism.org/intro/affirmations.html>*

HUMANLIGHT PREVIEW

Joe Fox, NJHN Vice President

Joe Fox is one of the originators of HumanLight, which has rapidly become an international success, and central holiday in the Humanist calendar.

Now there is a holiday you can celebrate and truly be yourself: HumanLight. You are a Humanist, which is worth celebrating. Late December in Western cultures is a time at which everyone expects you to be celebrating "the holidays." The first HumanLight celebration took place on December 23, 2001 in the metropolitan New York area. In 2002, HumanLight spread to at least 5 states in the U.S. This year, 2003, HumanLight is expected to become a global celebration. HumanLight celebrations have been wildly successful, providing a great time for participants and serving a means of getting the word out about Humanism.

As the momentum for HumanLight grows, along with other holidays such as Darwin Day (February 12) and World Humanist Day (June 21), the presence of Humanism in our lives and in our society will also grow. Imagine a world that is as aware of HumanLight as it is of December celebrations based on supernatural beliefs. A world in which all humankind can enjoy the good times, the self-expression, and the opportunity to let others know that there is a realistic,

philosophically consistent, and psychologically healthy alternative to ancient mythology and modern day dogma. Also, HumanLight celebrations have been very successful in obtaining tremendous positive press coverage for Humanism, at a time of the year that many media outlets are looking to spotlight alternatives to the holidays.

For more information about HumanLight, as well as to see photos and press coverage of previous HumanLight events, visit us on the internet at www.HumanLight.org

*Joseph Fox, Vice President
New Jersey Humanist Network*

RED BANK HUMANISTS

Bradford Holcombe, Editor

The Red Bank Humanists is a new organization founded on September 5, 2003 by Ron Steelman and Eric Seldner. There is a growing need and desire for a local Humanist group in South Jersey, and these people are working hard to create just such a community. They are working on their affiliations right now, and are considering working with NJHN. We welcome their efforts and wish them all possible success.

The following is selected text from their initial announcement:

The Red Bank Humanists invite you to their first meeting at the House Of Coffee on November 9, 11:00am, 10 Bridge Avenue (in the Galleria) Red Bank, NJ 07701.

The Red Bank Humanists strive to create an atmosphere of stimulating discussion and non-religious fellowship. If you are a Humanist, or just have an open mind, please join us. This is a time and place to openly share your thoughts and feelings about developing a personal moral code, one not based upon supernatural beliefs.

We will begin by discussing the Affirmations of Humanism as set out by the Council for Secular Humanism. The goal

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of our meeting is to provide a creative forum for the exploration of these concepts and we won't stop there. No advance preparation is necessary, copies of the affirmations will be available at the meeting.

Come join us. We hope to create a Humanist community in Monmouth County. And, we hope you'll be inspired by the words of others and moved to share your own!

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MEETING NOTES

Tim Ridge, NJHN Board Member

The annual picnic was held on August 9th at Schooley's Mountain Park. Two large pavilions kept over fifty people out of the rain. The food was great (a big thanks to Katy and Russ Fischer!) and so were the conversations.

Scout's Honor was shown on August 27th at the Library. Winner of Best Documentary and the Freedom of Expression award at the 2001 Sundance Film Festival, the film details the founding of *Scouting For All*, which is fighting to change the discriminatory policies of the Boy Scouts of America. Allen Reese discussed the decision by the Somerset County United Way to discontinue funding the BSA.

Guest speaker Gene Queval discussed *The Inevitability of Human Cloning* on September 24th. He presented cloning as an additional infertility solution. About 30 people attended and enjoyed the spirited discussion that followed.

NJHN MEMBERSHIP FORM

If you would like to become a paid member of NJHN, please fill out this form, make out a check to the New Jersey Humanist Network and send both to NJHN, Post Office Box 8212, Somerville NJ 08876. Members receive issues of THE NJHN BULLETIN free of charge.

- Individual membership - \$30
- Family membership - \$45
- Student/Limited Means membership - \$20
- Bulletin subscription only - \$15
- Receive bulletin via email only - Free

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- Please include me in the NJHN membership directory.

