



The Utah Humanist

Happy Humanist

July 2017

HumanistsofUtah.org

Volume 28 No. 7

Humanists of Utah is a Chapter of the *American Humanist Association*. We are a nonprofit corporation organized to advocate and promote ethical, rational, and democratic humanism among our membership and the larger community.



Humanism is a rational philosophy informed by science, inspired by art, and motivated by compassion. It affirms the dignity of each human being and supports individual liberty consonant with social and planetary responsibility. Humanism advocates participatory democracy, the open society, human rights and social justice. Free of supernaturalism, it recognizes human beings as part of nature and holds that values—be they religious, ethical, social, or political—have their source in human nature, experience, and culture. Humanism thus derives the goals of life from human need and interest rather than from theological or ideological abstractions, and asserts that humanity must take responsibility for its own destiny.

—*The Humanist*,
Official publication of the American
Humanist Association

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Live Long and Prosper

Elaine Stehel joined Humanists of Utah in 2009. She came to us from SHIFT, the University of Utah freethought group. She has been one of the most active people in our group; and that is an understatement!

Late last year her wife accepted a professional position in Vermont. July first Elaine packed up her car and drove across the country to be with her family. Significantly, she hosted an HoU event on June 30, the evening before she left.

At first as a student, Elaine recruited other young people to our chapter and attended meetings and events as time permitted. After graduating she became a regular and soon joined our Board of Directors. She has headed up our discussion groups, hikes, support of the Homeless Youth Resource Center, populated our booths at Pride and neighborhood fairs, wrote advice columns for our newsletter, earned credentials to be a Humanist Celebrant, and the list goes on.

Elaine has been active in a lot of other local and national organizations too. If you were watching local TV news stations around Christmas time a few years ago when gay marriage was legalized by the courts you probably saw her. She was one of the first couples to legally tie the knot here in Utah.

She reports that we may have been wrong all along; there is a Heaven and its name is “Vermont.” They to not clutter their highways with billboards, there are beautiful forests, and she says that she is very happy. Lucky Vermont, I’m sure it will become a better place with Elaine’s help.

In short, we miss her already but wish her long life, success, and happiness. We were fortunate to have her as long as we did.



—*Wayne Wilson*
on behalf of the
HoU Board of Directors

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July

Thursday, July 13

Eliot Hall

First Unitarian Church

569 S 1300 E, Salt Lake City

7:30 PM

Movie Night! Come join the fun as we screen *Rubin and Ed*, the 1991 cult classic with a Utah Connection! One reviewer said, "Reclusive Rubin Farr teams up with vocal but unsuccessful multi-level salesman Ed Tuttle on a quest to bury Rubin's dead cat in the "perfect spot." Their trip takes them across Utah's desert where they have run-ins with Ed's ex-wife Rula and an elusive Andy Warhol critic." It should be a lot of fun.

We'll have movie snacks.

All Humanists of Utah monthly meetings are free and open to the public, and donations are gratefully accepted though not required. Please bring interested friends and family!

Support the AHA

Humanists of Utah urges you to support the American Humanist Association.

The AHA is dedicated to preserving individual rights and promoting nationally the philosophy of humanism.

Membership brings you the *Humanist* magazine and *Free Mind* newsletter six times a year.

Annual membership is only \$45.00 (**\$35 Introductory Rate**) and can be paid with plastic. Phone (800) 743-6646 or write to:

American Humanist Association
1777 T Street, NW
Washington DC 20009

President's Message

Greetings freethinkers, I hope that your summer is going well. The temperature here in Holiday, Utah was 101 yesterday.

But, first off, I must give a heartfelt thanks to board member Elaine Stehel who has by the time you read this message moved back East. For Me personally she made sure that our Tenth Annual Darwin Day and our participation in the "Pride Festival" were big success, at a time when I could not be much help. And I personally thank her for that. Elaine has put a lot of her time and energy (I don't know where she gets it) into Humanists of Utah and I know the rest of the board members join in thanking Elaine for all she has done for the chapter. Good luck Elaine in your new life and we hope we can stay in touch.

Getting back to how hot it is, I was going to say that having moved back in with my mother to care for her does have some perks in that it is large enough and cool enough and has a swimming pool out back. So, I can't complain about the heat. I mention this about my mother's home to put into perspective how

different one's situation can be regarding healthcare. While my mother is fortunate to have Medicare, a supplemental insurance policy and personal assets that assure she get all the best care, there are many in our society who have little or none of that. As I have been watching more of what is going on with the Affordable Care Act I worry about all those individuals out there who must rely on Medicaid. I sure hope that our society can someday soon find a way to cover everyone. I personally think everyone should have something resembling Medicare from birth throughout their life.

I won't be able to attend our movie night, but I think you will be seeing a weird little movie called *Rubin and Ed*, It is really funny. I am looking forward to seeing you all at our August BBQ.

—Robert Lane
President, HoU



Plot Against America

~Book Review~

The *Plot Against America* by Philip Roth is an alarming story. In real life Charles Lindbergh ran against FDR for President of the United States. Lindbergh's campaign was based on "America First," which meant keep the USA out of World War II.

In the novel Lindbergh wins the election by a landslide. He has a close personal relationship with Hitler that grows into a treaty that the Axis Powers will not attack the USA and in return we will not supply Europe with any aid, domestic or especially military; isolationism.

The story is told from the point of view of Jewish families living in New Jersey. There are programs try to split up the families ranging encouraging young Jews to visit other areas of the country to a Homestead program where families are spread out and kept away from other Jewish communities. The Ku Klux Klan is there to prevent mixing.

It is a chilling tale, especially in light of the current administration's nationalistic policies and goals. An interesting reading to say the least. And the appendices note how close to reality this really was.

—Wayne Wilson

Nonprofit

Humanists of Utah is a nonprofit organization supported in large part by dues paying members. Our other major source of funds comes from generous gifts, mostly from the same dues payers who give a little more. In February 2003, chapter member Marion Craig died and left HoU a bequest of \$20,000. We invested this money in an endowment fund. The interest is still helping to pay for banquets, special events, etc. When you create your personal will please consider leaving a gift to Humanists of Utah.

Air Pollution = Alzheimers?

I think I may safely say that many of us in the humanist community have been dismayed at the federal government's radical shift away from environmentally conscious and data driven policy since January. The administration has paradoxically said that the EPA's essential mission is to "keep our air and water clean and safe", and then appointed climate-change denier and petroleum industry firebrand Scott Pruitt as head of the agency.

This obvious double-talk compels us to ask what "clean and safe air" means. Do those of us who really care actually know? With that question in mind, for the June 8th meeting our chapter's book club discussed an article from the January 27th, 2017 issue of Science magazine, "The Polluted Brain" by Emily Underwood. The article summarizes some 11 studies correlating very fine particulate air pollution, PM2.5, with Alzheimer's Disease and other forms of dementia.

Alzheimer's disease and dementia have become major public health issues, costing the United States an estimated \$259 billion in 2017 and expected to increase to \$570 billion by 2050. If pollution accounts for, say, 20% of these cases, it is already costing us at least \$50 billion a year.

(See http://act.alz.org/site/DocServer/2012_Costs_Fact_Sheet_version_2.pdf?docID=7161)

The article lists eleven different studies that link air pollution in general with increased chances of developing dementia, and describes some recent experiments that correlate PM 2.5 levels with brain inflammation and accumulation of amyloid b in mouse brains. It also mentions data that show an almost 1.8 times incidence of dementia in cigarette smokers

(Continued on page 4)



Air Pollution = Alzheimers?

over non-smokers. It lists other studies that show a sizable increase in dementia and cognitive problems in people who live close to major highways over those who live a few hundred meters away. There is, in short, a clear correlation between dementia and air pollution, much like the clear correlation between cigarette smoking and lung cancer that was published in 1959. The exact mechanism of how smoking caused cancer wasn't known then, but the relationship was undeniable.

The article also gives an enlightening view of the modern scientific method with its multi-disciplinary approach to data collection and analysis, the mining of large existing data sets to answer questions that weren't asked when the data were originally gathered, and how simple observations by a curious scientist can blossom into an unexpected and surprising conclusion. This area of inquiry was started by a neuroscientist observing the demented behavior of aging dogs living in badly polluted areas of Mexico City. Her initial studies led to recent research in Los Angeles collecting PM2.5 particles from air near freeways in Los Angeles and giving the collected particles to mice, then examining the brains of the mice microscopically. The mice breathing the pollutants show brain inflammation and amyloid b, a protein associated with Alzheimer's Disease, accumulation over mice breathing unpolluted air.

After I read a condensed version of the article aloud to our group of 16, the floor was opened for discussion. Art King, a member who worked in measuring air pollution during his professional career, described the techniques used to collect and separate the different particle sizes, and pointed out that we haven't even been able to measure PM2.5 until relatively recently.

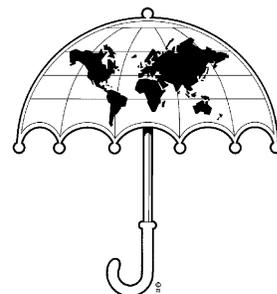
It is expensive and difficult, using Teflon filters that only came into existence in the 1990s (check this).

Other members spoke with dismay about their own experiences with pollution in their neighborhoods and how the political leadership in Utah seems beholden to the executives of polluting businesses, and dismissive of even examining these threats to public health that dirty air and water bring. Bob Lane's very colorful and humorous description of simple things like leaf blowers with their smoky 2-cycle engines blowing noxious clouds of dirt and dust into the air just to save a little labor in sweeping lawn clippings from sidewalks made us all laugh.

I think we all understood at the end that we as a society don't know what "clean and safe" means. We don't invest in understanding it, and we haven't even had the means to measure and understand it until recently. The national political will to do study it was uncertain at best before the advent of Donald Trump, and is virtually non-existent since he took office. In Utah the fossil fuel industry only comprises a small percentage of the state's economy, but possesses enormous political influence.

I hope we all left the meeting with a little more appreciation of the costs of pollution and the fact that we really don't know what keeping our "air and water clean and safe" means. The closing sentence of the article states that with air pollution, perhaps "there is no safe threshold".

—Steve Hanka





Humanists of Utah meetings are open to the public and free of any admission charge. A discussion and light refreshments follow the speaker's presentation. Come join us and **bring a friend!**

Monthly meetings are held at 7:30 PM in Eliot Hall of the First Unitarian Church, 569 South 1300 East, on the second Thursday of each month.

Disclaimer: The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of Humanists of Utah nor the American Humanist Association. Reprinting of articles is permitted for humanist groups promoting the interests of humanism if attribution is properly stated.



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>> Put Your Name Here <<
 >> Write an Article! <<

Mark August 10 ,on your calendar; you don't want to miss our annual picnic at John Young's home. More details next month.



Membership/Renewal Application

Name: _____

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- \$50 Regular Annual Membership and subscription to the Utah Humanist
 - \$90 Regular 2-year Membership and subscription to the Utah Humanist
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 - \$65 Regular 2-year Membership with email delivery of the Utah Humanist
 - \$20 Student Annual Membership and subscription to the Utah Humanist
 - \$20 Annual subscription to the Utah Humanist (I do not want to be listed as a member of **Humanists of Utah**)
 - Please send a *FREE* trial Subscription to the Utah Humanist
 - \$ _____ additional contribution to help promote public awareness of humanism
- => All contributions in excess of the \$20 subscription fee tax deductible.
 => *Members* have the right to vote in Chapter elections and participate in Chapter decisions.
 => Dues provide for information packets, honoraria to speakers, expenses of newsletter publication, trial subscriptions, copies to libraries, and newsletter exchange with other chapters.

Humanists of Utah
P.O. Box 1043
West Jordan, UT 84084

Notes:

- ◆ *General Meetings* are for all members and the general public. There are no admission charges.
- ◆ *Discussion Group* meetings are open to everyone. A different book or topic is covered every month.
- ◆ *Board Meetings* are planning and business sessions. They are open to all members.
- ◆ Eliot Hall is in the First Unitarian Church located at 569 South 1300 East in Salt Lake City.
- ◆ RE 201 is upstairs in the East Educational Building at the First Unitarian Church.

Upcoming Events

Meeting	Topic	Date	Time	Place
General Meeting	Movie Night <i>Rubin and Ed</i>	July 13	7:30	Eliot Hall
Board Meeting	Chapter Business	July 20	7:30	RE 201
General Meeting	Summer Picnic	Aug 10	6:00	Chez J. Young
Board Meeting	Chapter Business	Aug 17	7:30	RE 201



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