

First Coast

# FREETHINKER

The newsletter of the First Coast Freethought Society



February, 2005

Volume 3, Issue 2

## Abstinence-only sex ed flops

*Teens not taught to deal with realities of sex*

By Hugo Borresen

### HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENTS

today are being taught that abstinence from sexual intercourse before marriage is the only acceptable behavior. Despite surveys that report nearly half of teens in high school have had intercourse, about a third of U.S. schools teach only abstinence.

Teens are taught that premarital sex produces genital warts, that condoms are difficult to use and often fail, that no premarital sex is safe, and that some of these risks are life-threatening. They are told condoms do not prevent AIDS, and that premarital sex is immoral and leads to emotional instability.

They are taught that premarital sex damages their ability to love, degrades their self-worth, distorts their interpersonal relationships, leads to emotional illness and inability to concentrate in school, shotgun weddings, heartbreak, infertility, loneliness, cervical cancer, poverty, suicide, substance abuse, even depression and death.

These abstinence-only programs began in 1980s under the

Reagan administration. Government funding for this approach to sex education has since doubled.

Several such programs exist, but they fail to provide adequate information to prevent unwanted

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**“Advocates of abstinence-only education oppose reproductive choice and women’s equality and seek to make narrow religious beliefs the law of the land.”**

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pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

The Heritage Foundation, Family Research Council, Christian Coalition and other conservative groups developed programs that are included in federal legislation. Their guidelines assert:

- Abstinence from sexual activity is the only certain way to avoid out-of-wedlock pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and other associated health problems.
- Sexual activity outside of marriage is likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects.

• A mutually faithful, monogamous relationship in the context of marriage is the expected standard of human sexual activity.

The “expected standard” ignores that the vast majority of men and women are not virgins when they marry, that not everyone wants a “mutually faithful, monogamous marriage,” and no evidence exists that sex outside marriage is harmful.

Moreover, no evidence exists that abstinence programs even work — a recent Minnesota Department of Health study noted *increased* sexual activity at three high schools where abstinence-only programs were being taught. Teens who pledge abstinence often become active within 18 months, and then do not use contraception.

See “Abstinence,” page 5

### This month’s meeting

Guest speaker:  
**Laura Lane**  
of JCCI

Topic: “State of Education:  
Duval County Schools”

**Monday, February 14**  
**6:30 p.m.**

Unitarian Universalist Church  
7405 Arlington Expressway  
in the sanctuary

# President's message

## Football or education: Jacksonville needs better priorities

Football fans or not, I doubt any FCFS members are unaware of the Super Bowl, coming to town this month. It's been on the front page of the *Florida Times-Union* for weeks, and our city has spent umpteen thousands sprucing up for the big game, ostensibly to attract out-of-town businesses.

If we were to focus the same money, attention and business involvement on our school system, we might have a better chance of bringing businesses here.

One of the biggest hurdles in our race for jobs from new business is the poor training of our existing workforce. We are painfully short of college graduates and our high-school graduation rate is one of the worst in the country. Many of the companies moving in will bring their own white-collar workforce and will



**Susan Allen**

only use the Jacksonville worker pool for low-paying jobs no better than those already available.

Education in Jacksonville is everybody's business. All of us are affected by the success of the Duval County school system. We lose tax revenue when residents move to Clay and St. Johns counties for their better schools, yet we pay for the roads and infrastructure

these commuters use.

I urge you to come to our February meeting and get the facts about how our school system compares to other Florida districts and the rest of the nation. Laura Lane of the Jacksonville Community Council will discuss a JCCI study completed in 2004, which not only examined the problems but offered concrete solutions for making our schools better.

According to the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center, Southern Baptists are the least educated of any segment of the religious population. They attain on average 10.7 years of schooling. Only 18 percent of them graduate from college, compared to 30 percent of the overall U.S. population.

Southern Baptists are also the largest denomination in Jacksonville.



### First Coast **FREETHINKER**

The *First Coast Freethinker* is published for members of the First Coast Freethought Society, other freethinkers and potential freethinkers. We exchange newsletters with other freethought groups and obtain information from many sources.

Readers are invited and encouraged to reprint our original materials provided they give credit to this publication.

The officials of the FCFTS are not responsible for opinions or other statements expressed in this newsletter. It is intended to convey ideas to stimulate thinking and discussion about a wide variety of subjects.

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We welcome submissions. Deadlines are the second week of the month for the following month. Submit contributions by e-mail to Hugo or Michael (see above), or mail to Hugo Borresen, 8831 Taurus Circle, South, Jacksonville, FL 32222. Web site submissions: Carrie Renwick, [carrieren@att.net](mailto:carrieren@att.net).

# Her job is not finished

Margaret Sanger, 1879-1966

MARGARET HIGGINS SANGER was a remarkable woman whose influence remains with us. She spread understanding of the need for birth control when it was regarded as immoral.

She was the sixth of 11 children of a mother who died from tuberculosis. Sanger's father gave her the character to succeed.

Michael Higgins was a freethinker and a radical who taught his daughter to question convention and to stand up for what she believed.

She married William Sanger, an architect, and enjoyed bohemian life in Greenwich Village, joined the Socialist Party, and was active in the labor movement.

She became a visiting nurse to the needy and worked in the ghettos of New York City. She saw women die in childbirth and from abortions. Information about birth control was illegal in 1912, but she wrote a column on sex education for the *New York Call*, titled "What Every Girl Should Know."

"I was finished with palliatives and superficial cures; I was resolved to seek out the root of evil, to do something to change the destiny of mothers whose miseries were vast as the sky," she said.

In 1914 she published the first issue of *The Woman Rebel* that advocated militant feminism and the right to practice birth control.

When indicted for violating postal obscenity laws, she jumped bail and fled to England but ordered release of 100,000 copies

of *Family Limitation*, a pamphlet that gave instructions in use of contraceptive methods. In England she broadened her arguments for birth control to include sexual relations without fear of pregnancy. In Holland she learned about the use of the flexible diaphragm fitted by a trained staff.

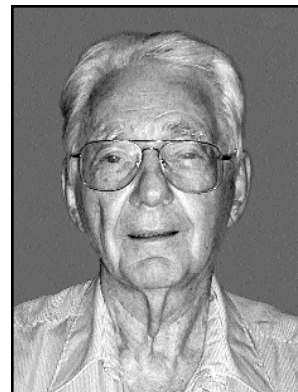
She returned home in 1916 and opened the nation's first birth-control clinic in Brooklyn. It was raided nine days later, and she and her staff spent 30 days in jail. But the publicity gained her wealthy supporters. An appellate court exempted physicians from the law prohibiting dissemination of contraceptive information to women if prescribed for medical reasons.

So she opened a doctor-run clinic in 1923 with women doctors and social workers. She also founded the Birth Control Clinical Research Bureau, which collected data on the effectiveness of contraceptives. She separated from her husband and married a wealthy oil magnate who funded the birth control movement.

In 1917 she started *Birth Control Review*, and four years later, the American Birth Control League. She sought support from the medical profession, social workers, and the eugenics movement. She wanted to reduce the transmission of mental and physical defects to future generations but her support of the sterilization of the mentally incompetent tainted her reputation.

In 1929 she formed the

## Editor's Corner



**Hugo Borresen**

National Committee on Federal Legislation for Birth Control to lobby for the right of physicians to legally prescribe contraceptives. But most doctors were hostile and the Catholic Church opposed her, so she failed to get government support.

After World War II she helped found the International Planned Parenthood Federation, which is the largest private family-planning organization. She supported research that eventually led to the development of the birth control pill. And in 1965, a year before she died, the U.S. Supreme Court made birth control legal for married couples.

Once, when Sanger was scheduled to speak in Boston, the bishop told the police chief to prevent the meeting, which he did. Catholic women now use birth control as much as other women (Paul J. Weber, *America* magazine, October 28, 2000).

Planned Parenthood offers many services, but critics concentrate on objecting to abortion. After 90 years, sex education and a woman's right to choose is still up in the air.



# Times-Union reporter on a religious crusade?

Guest Commentary

By Curtis Wolf

FLORIDA TIMES UNION reporter Jeff Brumley recently wrote three articles about the Asian tsunami. In one of these, appearing November 28, Jacksonville pastor Garry Wiggins of Evangel Temple Assembly of God said, "Good can come from these terrible situations."

On December 29 Brumley wrote one about hurricanes in our region, titled, "Hurricane season: A rebuke for state or reason for thanks?" Here's an excerpt:

"When God became angry at the world, the Bible says, He washed it clean with the great flood. The fact is, Scripture is replete with stories of God's displeasure expressed in terms of catastrophic events. Which begs the question as the 2004 hurricane season draws to a close: Were Hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan and Jeanne expressions of God's wrath? Were Floridians being punished for some collective sin?"

What these stories have in common is the message that God is in control. Oh, really? The death toll from the tsunami is more than 140,000. If God were in control, he had a hellacious temper tantrum.

I'm floored by some of the comments by Christians quoted in these articles.

What good can possibly come from the deaths of thousands of people?

We all want to make sense of these terrible tragedies. However, we have to face reality. There is no sense to be made from them. This is nature in its foulest mood. But it's nothing personal. Nature does not see us as special, and sees no need to protect us from its fury.

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**"Were Hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan and Jeanne expressions of God's wrath?"**

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What is lacking from Brumley's articles is balance. In these kinds of articles, the secular humanist perspective needs to be included as a logical counterweight to religion's illogical dribble. If the *Times-Union* does not allow us this opportunity, we must look for other ways to provide a voice of reason in this city. ❖

**Editor's note:** The *Florida Times-Union* is one of 61 newspapers operated by Augusta, Ga.-based Morris Communications Corp., headed by William S. Morris III, an elder at Augusta's Reid Memorial Presbyterian Church and a former director at Georgia's Columbia Theological Seminary. Morris clarified his company's conservative Christian stance in the editorial page of the *Augusta Chronicle*, Morris's flagship paper, in 1994:

"This newspaper is owned by a Christian businessman. God is the Supreme Being of our universe, and we make no apology for defending America's Judeo-Christian heritage and values."

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## Abstinence-only promotes ignorance

continued from p. 1

Abstinence-only programs violate the First Amendment when they are advanced by religious groups. In 2002, the American Civil Liberties Union sued (*ACLU of Louisiana v. Foster*) and was able to get the religious references in the Louisiana programs removed.

Some two-thirds of people of all faiths want comprehensive instruction, according to a 2004 report from the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. That organization's Web site states:

"Advocates of abstinence-only education oppose

reproductive choice and women's equality and seek to make narrow religious beliefs the law of the land.

"Make no mistake — they don't represent most people of faith, who overwhelmingly support providing accurate information about sexuality."

Advocates of comprehensive instruction say the abstinence-only approach, by omitting methods of contraception and disease prevention and discouraging the use of condoms, denies teens the information they need to make informed and responsible choices.



# Beam them up, Scotty

## *Getting ready for the Rapture*

by Fred W. Hill

BREATHLESS WITH WONDER, we'll watch them soar up to the heavens — those chosen few, the saved, the faithful favored of God.

Any day now, it'll happen.

They'll be transported to meet face to face with their god, and to look down in piteous glee upon the rest of us, the wretched, earth-bound masses. Those who did not believe — or who believed, but not quite in the exact, prescribed manner — will suffer the consequences of our errant ways.

So goes a wildly popular belief in a forthcoming event known as the Rapture.

"People will literally disappear as they are called up to the clouds to meet the Lord in the air," writes proponent Alan Yusko in his online tract, *What the Bible Says About the Rapture*.

This is an example of where literal interpretations of the Bible can lead. It's based on Thessalonians 4:16-17, a passage from a letter attributed to the apostle Paul (circa 53 C.E.) to a fledgling Christian congregation in Macedonia.

"For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first, then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in



the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord."

In *Rapture: Hope or Hoax*, B.A. Robinson of the Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance describes Paul's letter as an attempt to correct non-orthodox beliefs speculating "that only those Christians who were alive at the second coming would have the possibility of sharing in the Kingdom of God at Christ's return."

In the face of mounting fears among Christians that they would die before Christ bothered to show back up on Earth and thus miss out on being lifted up to be with God, Paul assured them that once they were saved they had an eternal ticket to heaven, regardless of whether they were alive or dead when Jesus finally deems to grace the planet with his presence again.

Over the next 17 centuries most Christian theologians interpreted Paul's words as prophesizing a 1,000-year period of suffering and persecution of God's people, known as "the tribulation," to be followed by the Second Coming of Christ.

In the late 1800s, however, John Nelson Darby, an Irish Protestant, and C. J. Scofield, a Texas pastor, advanced the "dispensational" theory, which held that the Rapture would occur before the tribulations, and would be instantaneous.

This new wrinkle on apocalyptic beliefs spared "true" Christians from all tribulations. Once the "saved" were brought to dwell in the mansions of heaven to enjoy the company of God, Satan would be let loose upon Earth to punish doubters, adherents of false gods or followers of errant Christian doctrines.

Despite continual disappointments when the Rapture failed again and again to occur on specific dates as prophesized — prompting savvy rapturists to cite scripture to the effect that no one knows when it will occur — this creed remains popular among fundamentalist Protestants.

So much so that the *Left Behind* series of novels about the Rapture by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins has sold over 62 million copies, according to a recent report in *Time* ("Religion: The Pop Prophets") by David Gates.

Other Christian groups who do not buy this bill of goods, will — like the rest of us — turn green with envy as the fundies take to the sky. The Catholic Church, for example, rejects "even modified forms of this falsification of the kingdom to come under the name of millenarianism, writes Bishop Robert H. Brom of San Diego on

See "Rapture," p. 6

# Invitation

**To:** All freethinkers, FCFS members, friends and guests.

**What:** Dinner and socializing at the Steak and Ale Restaurant, near Baymeadows Road and Interstate 95 South.

**When:** Tuesday, February 22 (fourth Tuesday of each month). Gather at 6:00 p.m. for cocktails in the lounge; 7:00 p.m. for dinner.

**RSVP** to Carrie Renwick at 268-8826, or e-mail [carrieren@att.net](mailto:carrieren@att.net). Deadline to RSVP is Sunday, February 20.

## SEZ WHO?

See if you can identify the speaker:

“The national government will maintain and defend the foundations on which the power of our nation rests. It will offer strong protection to Christianity as the very basis of our collective morality.

“Today, Christians stand at the head of our country. We want to fill our culture again with the Christian spirit. We want to burn out all the recent immoral developments in literature, in the theatre, and in the press — in short, we want to burn out the poison of immorality which has entered into our whole life and culture as a result of liberal excess during the past years.”

Answer on back page under  
“2005 Events”

## Rapture and Revelations cont'd from p. 5

the *Catholic Answers* Web site.

Still, a 2002 *Time/CNN* poll found that “some 59 percent of Americans believe that events found in the Book of Revelation are going to come true.”

That percentage has translated into the election of 45 senators and 186 representatives who have earned an 80- to 100-percent approval rating from the Christian Coalition, according to Glenn Scherer in *Grist* magazine.

Politicians who are proponents of this view have pushed policies undoing regulations designed to protect the environment and even the long-term economic welfare and health of all Americans.

Fundamentalist such as House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Texas) and Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chair James Inhofe (R-Oklahoma) and even President George W. Bush apparently have more regard for the spirit world in which they soon expect to find themselves than for the real world and future generations of Americans to which they have real responsibilities.

Their ideas hold serious ramifications for the environment and for the future of our planet: Why conserve our environment if it's all going to hell in a handbasket any day now?

To make matters worse, some even believe that the sooner mankind uses up the world's resources, the sooner the Rapture will occur. James Watt, President Reagan's secretary of the interior explained, “God gave us these things to use. After the last tree is felled, Christ will come back.”

Anne Coulter summed up this dangerous hubris in a 2001 appearance on Fox's *Hannity & Colmes*, when she offered, “God said, ‘Earth is yours. Take it. Rape it.’” She certainly has a way with words.

Frankly, I'd be ecstatic if every last one of these rapturous fundamentalists were “beamed up,” but I'm not holding my breath.

In the meantime, they could create hell on earth for all life on this planet — except perhaps for cockroaches.

They'll likely still be crawling around long after the last generation of Christians has died and gone — not to reside in exclusive, stately mansions in heaven above, but to rot with everyone else upon the lowly earth.



**First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.**

P.O. Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591 • (904) 288-6291

**2005 Membership application**



Name		Date	
Home address	City	State	ZIP
E-mail address	Home phone	Business phone	
Occupation	Areas of interest and/or expertise		

How did you hear about us?

MEMBERSHIP: Regular (\$30/yr.)  Student (\$15/yr.)  Senior (\$15/yr.)

I'm interested in getting involved in the FCFTS as a

General member  Committee member  Officer  Financial supporter

Do you object to having your name appear on our membership list, which is only distributed to other members?

YES  NO

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

**First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.**

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[www.firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](http://www.firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org)

**Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of the First Coast Freethought Society is to serve the needs of the non-religious population of Northeast Florida, to promote freethought and secular humanism, to provide a place for agnostics, rationalists, atheists, skeptics and other freethinkers.

**Meetings**

The FCFTS meets the second Monday of every month at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Jacksonville, 7405 Arlington Expressway, Jacksonville, FL 32211. (904) 725-8133  
 Meeting time: 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

**Membership**

Regular: \$30 per year • Seniors & students: \$15  
 Application is also available on our Web site.

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**Our motto: "To question is the answer."**

# humanist book discussion group



*When:* 2:00 p.m., third Sunday of each month.

*Where:* Borders Books, 8801 Southside Blvd.  
Phone 519-6500. Books are usually in stock.

*What:* Books planned for discussion:

- **February 20** — *The Age of Reason*  
by Thomas Paine
- **March 20** — *Dumbth: The Lost Art of  
Thinking* by Steve Allen

For more information, leave a message at 996-1553

## First Coast Freethought Society

### 2005 EVENTS

February 14 — Monthly meeting  
February 20 — Book discussion group  
February 22 — Social at Steak & Ale

March 14 — Monthly meeting  
March 20 — Book discussion group  
March 22 — Social at Steak and Ale

April 11 — Monthly meeting  
April 17 — Book discussion group  
April 26 — Social at Steak and Ale

Answer to "Sez Who":  
It was Adolph Hitler in 1933

Return service requested

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Jacksonville, FL 32222