

FIRST COAST FREETHOUGHT SOCIETY, INC.

An organization of freethinkers and secular humanists supporting free inquiry, education, and community in the Northeast Florida area

Our Motto: “To Question is the Answer.”

Post Office Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591
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The First Coast

FreeThinker



Newsletter of the First Coast Freethought Society

October 2012

Volume 11, Issue 10

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Earl Coggins

I just finished reading *Free Will* by Sam Harris. Many readers will remember Harris for some of his other books, which include *The End of Faith* and *Letter to a Christian Nation*. Harris burst onto the free-thought publishing scene eight years ago

with *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason*, which won a coveted Pen award (Martha Albrand award for first

York Times bestseller list for 33 weeks,



was

primarily a response to the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center buildings by religious extremists. *The End of Faith* received a lot of criticism. *Letter to a Christian Nation* was a response to that criticism. Harris has also written *The*

“When I carry out the activities and behaviors necessary to please the pleasure centers of my brain, am I in control of those tasks? If my brain starts the process in motion, what does that say about free will?”

“So you really think that God would plant a bunch of bones in the earth to test your faith? Either you’re in denial or God has some serious self-esteem issues.”

—Coral Yoshi

nonfiction). The book, which was on the *New*

(Continued on page 3)

October 2012 Meeting

“Where’s the ‘Freedom’ in Ballot Amendment 8, *The Florida Religious Freedom Amendment?*”

Rabbi Merrill Shapiro, President, National Board of Trustees
Americans United for Separation of Church and State

Monday, October 15, 2012, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

In the Sanctuary, upper parking lot level • Doors open at 6:00
Unitarian Universalist Church • 7405 Arlington Expressway • Jacksonville, FL

Humanist Book Discussion Group



When: 2:00 p.m., the first Sunday of each month

Where: Books-A-Million, 9400 Atlantic Boulevard, Jacksonville, FL 32225

What: Books planned for discussion:

- November 4, 2012 - *The Mindfulness Revolution*, edited by Barry Boyce
- December 2, 2012 - *Energy for Future Presidents*, by Richard A. Muller

Books may be found in the library, purchased from local book stores, or purchased online. The First Coast Freethought Society will receive a small remuneration from your purchase (at no additional cost to you) if you first go to <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org> and then click the link to Amazon.com for your purchase.

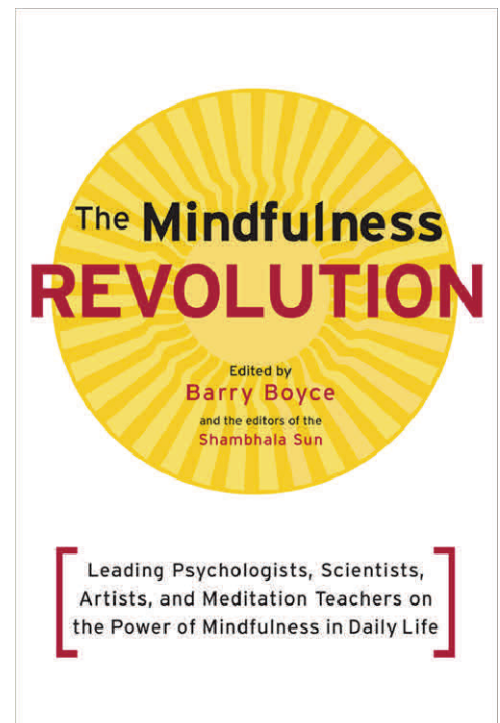
A growing body of scientific research indicates that mindfulness can reduce stress and improve mental and physical health. Countless people who have tried it say it's improved their quality of life. Simply put, mindfulness is the practice of paying steady and full attention, without judgment or criticism, to our moment-to-moment experience. Here is a collection of the best writing from leading figures in the field on what mindfulness is, why we should practice it, and how to apply it in daily life.

Selections include:

- Leading thinker **Jon Kabat-Zinn** on the essence of mindfulness, stress reduction, and positive change
- Physician and meditation teacher **Jan Chozen Bays, MD**, on how and why to practice mindful eating
- Leadership coach **Michael Carroll** on practicing mindfulness at work
- Psychologist **Daniel Goleman** on a mindful approach to shopping and consuming
- Pianist **Madeline Bruser** on how mindfulness can help us overcome performance anxiety

The Mindfulness Revolution also includes an in-depth discussion by writer-editor Barry Boyce about how mindfulness is being applied in a variety of professional fields—from healthcare to education, from performing arts to business—to improve effectiveness and enhance well-being.

For more information, contact Herb Gerson at 904-363-6446, or 12herbert30gerson@bellsouth.net.



Monthly Social

Where: OLIVE GARDEN on Philips Highway, across from the Avenues Mall.

When: Tuesday October 23, 2012 at 6:00 p.m. Proceed directly to our room.
Drinks at 6:00. Dinner at 7:00. (Order from the menu.)

RSVP: CarrieRen@att.net (or 268-8826) by **Tues. a.m.**, if you plan to go!

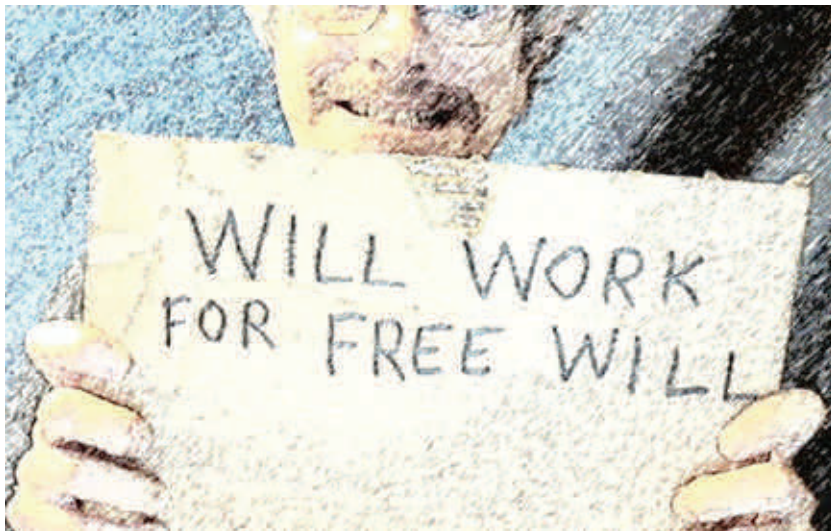
(President's Message, cont'd from page 1)
Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Moral Values. Sam Harris and his wife Annaka Harris also have an essay available as an eBook titled *Lying*. I am reading it as I write this message. I plan to read *The Moral Landscape* later this year.

In his book *Free Will*, Harris states, "Our sense of free will results from a failure to appreciate this: We do not know what we intend to do until the intention itself arises. To understand this is to realize that we are not the authors of our thoughts and actions in the way that people generally suppose."

I read this book after hearing the presentation on free will by Dr. Elaine Hull at the First Coast Freethought Society's August meeting. I have been intrigued for much of my adult life by the notion that humans do not have total free will. I am skeptical and my position is simple: I am sure that I am unsure, but I am leaning towards a belief that Harris and all of the other determinists before him are onto something.

Harris puts it another way: "Consider what it would take to actually have free will. You

would need to be aware of all the factors that determine your thoughts and actions, and you would need to have complete control over those factors. But there is a paradox here that vitiates the very notion of freedom—for what would influence the influences? More influences? None of these adventitious mental states are the real you. You are not controlling the storm, and you are not lost in it. You are the storm."



An interesting aspect about the free will argument concerns most people's agreement that a lack of proper brain function can influence a person's ability to behave in an acceptable fashion. This position implies that the brain is pushing our buttons and pulling the levers that control behavior. If that is a valid conclusion, our will is totally dependent upon our brains which are programmed by nature and nurture. "So and so

is brainwashed" is a great example to demonstrate how many people believe that a person can lose his or her free will, if we have any at all.

Many people have been influenced by drug and alcohol addictions. Others have been won over by charismatic people who influence their behavior.

Again, Harris weighs in: "Most people are ruled by many mutually incompatible goals and aspirations: You want to finish your work, but you are also inclined to stop working so that you can play with your kids. You aspire to quit smoking, but you also crave another cigarette. You are struggling to save money, but you are also tempted to buy a new computer. Where is the freedom when one of these opposing desires inexplicably triumphs over its rival?"

One position in the free will argument/debate is the compatibilist position which contends that human behavior is a combination of free will and determinism. Says Harris: "Compatibilists generally claim that a person is free as

(Continued on page 9)

Vlad Dracula in Life, Legend and Literature

Fred W. Hill

In the classic 1931 Universal film *Dracula*, Abraham Van Helsing saves himself from the aristocratic vampire by displaying a cross from which Dracula shields his eyes and retreats. The symbol of the Christian god was unbearable to the undead and unholy fictional count. His historical namesake, however, believed he ruled by divine right, his every deed sanctioned by the Christian god.

Dracula, aka Vlad III or Vlad Tepes, is regarded as a national and religious hero in his homeland of what is now Romania, divided into several principalities in his time, pinched between the Holy Roman and Ottoman empires. Dracula's very surname derived from his status as a protector of the faith. Months before his birth in

1431, his father, Vlad II, had been inducted into the Order of the Dragon, a chivalric order whose members were oath-bound to defend Christianity from all enemies, in particular the heretical Hussites and the infidel Turks. The elder Vlad adopted the name Dracul, meaning "the dragon," which had no sinister connotations among his peers. In the Romanian language, however, "dracul" also meant "the devil" and dragons had long been associated with evil, as in the popular myth of St. George and the dragon. Dracula, itself, merely means

"son of the dragon" and became the family name. Tepes, meaning "the impaler," was attached to Vlad III's name decades after his death in remembrance of his preferred form of execution. In Romanian lore, Dracula was cruel but just in his effort to protect and bring order to his realm.

Although born in neighboring Transylvania, Dracula reigned as "Voivode" (Prince) of Wallachia. His father was forced to pay tribute to the Ottomans who also held Dracula and a brother, Radu, hostage, from

more subservient brother Radu in charge. Ongoing turmoil permitted him to briefly regain power yet again in 1476, before he

was assassinated, and his head chopped off and sent to Constantinople for placement on a very long stake as evidence that the hated impaler was indeed dead.

Although his regal contemporaries, Christian and Muslim, routinely meted out nearly every

imaginable form of sadistic torture and agonizing death sentences for real or imagined crimes against church and state, Dracula became noted for excessive viciousness. In 1457, Dracula invited the boyars and other leading citizens of Tirgoviste, the

"Dracula felt empowered by god to do whatever he felt was right, no matter how horrid others might find his actions."

Wallachian capitol, to a lavish Easter feast. As recorded by the poet Michael Beheim¹, as the noblemen finished their meal, Dracula asked them, "How many princes have you known?" The eldest among them recalled 30, the youngest estimated seven. Rhetorically wondering why there should be so many, Dracula charged, "The guilt is entirely due to your shameful intrigues," and arrested them. The able-bodied were marched 50 miles to an abandoned fortress which they were forced to rebuild as a castle. The feeble were impaled. In another story,

the time he was 11 until he was 17. He was released after a revolt by the boyars (aristocracy) of Wallachia, instigated by John Hunyadi of Transylvania, and overthrew Vlad II who was slain along with his eldest son, Mircea II, who was buried alive. Dracula had been both harshly disciplined and well-educated by the Turks, often alongside the future sultan and conqueror of Constantinople, Mehmed II. The Turks helped Dracula take over Wallachia in 1448, but he was quickly ousted only to return again in 1456, ruling until 1462, when the Turks placed his



Dracula invited beggars throughout his realm to a feast where they put on fine clothes and ate and drank as much as they could, until those who were still sober discovered they were locked in and the mansion was on fire, which was Dracula's solution to the vagrancy problem. Most of those who ran afoul of Dracula's wrath or sense of justice, however, were impaled—placed on a large, oiled stake, hoisted up on the ground and left to a slow, agonizing death, displayed until their remains fell apart. Rich or poor, noble or commoner, local or alien, Christian or Muslim, none could be sure Dracula would not have them impaled for even the mildest of offenses. During his struggles against the Turks, Dracula left thousands in a "forest of the impaled" that even shocked Mehmed II who invaded Wallachia in retaliation for Dracula's failure to pay required tribute and other acts of insubordination.

While he lived, truth and myth were already becoming mixed in accounts of the dark prince. Beheim wrote several contemporary accounts of Dracula, including the *Story of a Bloodthirsty Madman Called Dracula of Wallachias*, a poem he read to entertain Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III in 1463.² Dracula's real and imagined exploits were best-selling fodder for the earliest nonreligious books published by the new printing presses, invented during his lifetime. The more horrid the stories, the better they sold (seems the public's taste for violent entertainment

never changes all that much).

Of course, Dracula might have become a relatively obscure, if notorious, historical figure if Bram Stoker had not resurrected the prince for his 1897 novel. Stoker had already done



Vlad Dracula, ready to go out for Halloween and impale whoever doesn't give him a good treat.

much research on vampire folklore of eastern Europe, incorporating them into his story along with elements from previous vampire literature, including a novel about an aristocratic vampire inspired and perhaps partially written by Lord Byron, *The Vampyre* (1819); the penny dreadful series, *Varney the Vampire* (1845-1848), and a lesbian

vampire gothic romance, *Carmilla* (1871). Dracula and vampires were staples of popular culture long before Stoker had the brilliant idea of welding them together in his own novel, originally titled *The Wampire Count* before he came across stories about the Wallachian prince and took note of the sinister appeal of the name Dracula—certainly an improvement over Varney!

Dracula was a product of his times, a pawn used by rival empires unable to trust anyone. Despite his status as ruler of a fairly small realm surrounded by powerful and contentious rulers, Dracula adopted the autocratic ideal of divine right, subject only to God and hence not answerable to anyone on Earth, except, of course, whoever happened to have a bigger, more well-led army. The historical Dracula was more of a monster than his literary and cinematic counterparts, but no cross would have compelled him to step back in fear. Rather than fearing God, Dracula felt empowered by God to do whatever he felt was right, no matter how horrid others might find his actions. The real Dracula likely would have taken the cross from Van Helsing's hand, kissed it, and then had him impaled in time for dinner entertainment.

¹*Dracula, Prince of Many Faces*, Radu R. Florescu & Raymond T. McNally, pp. 90-91.

²*ibid.*, p. 201.



Let No Love Fall Victim to *Circumstance*: A Movie Review

Curtis Wolf

Every so often, you watch a film that reminds you that life is to be lived to the fullest with those special people in your life that you have the privilege to know. You are also reminded that people do not always have control over the way that they live their lives; and this lack of control can often be an impediment to living life as fully as they would like. Such a film for me is the 2011 Sundance Film Festival Audience Award winner, *Circumstance*.

The movie is about two 16-year-old inseparable best friends, Atafeh and Shireen, coming of age in Tehran, Iran. Atafeh is the rebellious daughter of a wealthy secular family in which music, dancing, and intellectual curiosity are encouraged. The more timid Shireen has a precarious family situation since her parents died due to their dissident activities against the theocratic dictatorship in Iran, and this puts Shireen under a cloud of suspicion and disrepute of which she is often reminded by those in authority. She now lives with her intolerant uncle who makes it abundantly clear that he would like to divest himself of responsibility for Shireen by marrying her off to a much older man as soon as possible. It is not surprising that Shireen finds solace from all of this by spending much of her time with Ata-

feh and her family. This difference in social status and the way that it is internalized by the two girls will play a key role in how everything plays out for them in this film.

A normal social life, as experienced by the typical teenager in the U.S., is impossible for Atafeh and Shireen due to Iran's stifling rules against symbols of the decadent West such as music and dancing. Yet Tehran's youth are quite resourceful in getting around those rules by holding illegal parties in

gay activist Harvey Milk, and *Sex and the City*.

While the wealth and political connections of her father provide a protective enclave for Atafeh's family within the religious madness that is Iran, this madness enters the household under the guise of prodigal son and brother of Atafeh, Mehran, who returns to the



“...[T]hey have little control over the direction that they can take this sexual awakening and all talk of politics and rights means little if you don't have the basic right to chart the course of your own life even when others are determined to chart it for you.”

family after drug rehab. He finds another addiction—religion—in the local mosque, and soon allies himself with the Morality Police as an informer. His parents, who have learned that their best move within this police state is to go along to get along, soon find the enemy that they tried to keep

apartments and abandoned warehouses. Within these safe havens hidden from the prying eyes of busybody mullahs, Atafeh and Shireen enjoy rap music, dancing, alcohol and drugs, and hooking up with boys. They have to be on the lookout for the Morality Police which is always on the prowl, and if it discovers one of these parties, it will shut the party down and arrest everyone in the room. They also rebel against the restrictions forced upon them in a hilarious scene in the movie by dubbing into Farsi black market copies of *Milk*, a biographical film about

outside of their home now occupies a bedroom within that very home; and we see how Mehran uses his new-found power to take a more dominant role in the family to the point that he sets up a camera surveillance system within the house to keep tabs on his “sinful” family.

If this does not create enough tension within the family, Atafeh and Shireen fall in love with each other during a beach vacation. Since homosexuality is illegal within Iran, there is little hope for their relationship, and arranged marriages

(Continued from page 6)

are not that far into their futures. So they enjoy their intimate moments in the here and now and dream of escaping together to the relative freedom of the more tolerant Dubai that is located nearby to the south of Iran. It is an unrealistic dream perhaps, but it holds them together for that moment.

Their ill-fated love affair begins to unravel when Mehran becomes obsessed with Shireen and manipulates her terrifying encounter

with the Morality Police one night into an unwanted marriage with him. At this point, it would take a miracle for Atafeh's and Shireen's

lesbian relationship to survive, and miracles are in short supply in this movie. As I noted earlier, there is a difference in social status between Atafeh and Shireen. This difference is internalized within Atafeh as a belief that she can do whatever she wants, and within Shireen as a belief that she is "damaged goods" as she has been told repeatedly. This tragically leads them in opposite directions – Shireen to sacrifice herself for Atafeh and accept her fate, and Atafeh to break free from her chains and embark upon an uncertain journey.

The movie's clever use of black and white filming of the star crossed lovers, as if they are being viewed through a security camera, makes the point that in Iran you are always being watched, and failure to follow the rules can be dangerous to you. A young Iranian woman posting on the Facebook page for *Circumstance* pointed out that a woman could be arrested for holding hands or being in the same car with a man who is not her husband or male family member, and a woman cannot leave the country without the

While all this talk of women's rights and politics is important, the film is at its best when it focuses on the relationship between Atafeh and Shireen and the way that it is never allowed to openly blossom into something even better. Under different circumstances (hence the name of the film), they may decide to marry and enjoy a long life together. Or this may be nothing more than a brief period of sexual experimentation. The problem is that they have little control over the direction that they can take this sexual



Nikohl Boosheri & Sarah Kazemy, stars of Circumstance

ual awakening; and all talk of politics and rights means little if you don't have the basic right to chart the course of your own life even when oth-

ers are determined to chart it for you. permission of her father, husband, or guardian. Incredibly, a woman could be arrested if her shirt sleeves are too short and her elbows are exposed!

My hope for Iran is in the fact that 70 percent of its citizens are under 30. This means that most people in Iran know about the 1979 Iranian uprising that ended Shah Pahlavi's despotic rule only from the history books and therefore have no commitment to the supposed revolution that followed, and every reason to want to end the even worse despotic rule of the Iranian mullahs.

ers are determined to chart it for you.

If you are not convinced of how fortunate we are to have the First Amendment in the U.S. Constitution and even stronger separation of church and state protections in the Florida Constitution, watch this movie. Then remember how the Iranian theocracy keeps people like Atafeh and Shireen from openly loving each other as they should be able to do in a free society, when you decide how to vote on Amendment 8 that will be on the November ballot.



Amendment 8

Susan Ert-Ker

The core of Amendment 8 is this question: Should taxpayer money (from the State treasury) be given to religious institutions without restriction? A “no” answer to that question should yield a no vote on amendment 8.

A good link to the complete wording of the amendment: [http://ballotpedia.org/wiki/index.php/Florida_Religious_Freedom_Amendment_8_\(2012\)](http://ballotpedia.org/wiki/index.php/Florida_Religious_Freedom_Amendment_8_(2012)).

My position is that we should vote NO on amendment 8.

Removing the line (that amendment 8 wants to remove from the Florida Constitution) would eliminate the following restrictions:

1. Taxpayer money can't be used to proselytize a particular religion
2. Taxpayer money must be used for services offered to the entire community, not for services offered exclusively to those of a particular faith

I strongly believe that those restrictions are necessary. There is a lot of research showing that a pluralistic society is good. Allowing various religious and nonreligious views to be discussed in the open without fear of retaliation is good. Any legislation that attempts to reduce that plurality should be feared. From the reading that I have done, I strongly believe that the wall separating the government from any particular religion is what the founding leaders of our grand country had in mind when drafting the estab-

tax dollars from our state treasury.

For those two reasons (restrictions are needed and parishioners should fund their own religion) my position is that we should all vote NO on 8.

Amendment 8 is the topic of the October 15 FCFS meeting. I will be there (outside the meeting room), handing out **VOTE**



NO on 8 bumper stickers. Please take one if you are willing to put it on your car. We need to get the word out that Amendment 8's goal is to allow our state politicians to give money to their favorite religion. I

will not be there on behalf of the FCFS since the organization cannot tell you how to vote. I am handing out bumper stickers as a private citizen.



ishment clause of the first amendment.

Churches, mosques, and synagogues should be funded by donations from the parishioners. I see no reason (especially no fiscally sound reason) to fund religions of the politicians with



CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR 2013 BOARD!

Would you like to help shape the future of the First Coast Freethought Society, share your bright ideas and keep us going strong? If you are interested in taking part in the leadership of the FCFS, contact the Nominating Committee Chair, Bobbie Nord (bobbienord@gmail.com or call 904-591-7636) to discuss running for a board position.



(President's Message, continued from page 3)

long as he is free from any outer or inner compulsions that would prevent him from acting on his actual desires and intentions.”

The pleasure centers of our brain (inner compulsions) have a lot of influence on human behavior. If I get pleasure from a certain activity or behavior, the pleasure centers of the brain are going to want constant quantities (reinforcement) of those activities and behaviors. How does this affect free will? When I carry out the activities and behaviors necessary to please the pleasure centers of

my brain, am I in control of those tasks? If my brain starts the process in motion, what does that say about free will?



Sam Harris

Is it a combination (compatibilism) of determinism and free will? Harris's analogy: "A puppet is free as long as he loves his strings."

It has been suggested (Vohs and Schooler) that a huge motivating factor for controlling impulses is a direct result of a belief in free will. Without that belief, your consciousness will be less inclined to resist impulsive behavior.

The idea that humans have less than 100% free will is troubling. If humans do not have 100% free will, how can anyone be held accountable for behavior that has been deemed unacceptable? Add to that yet another dilemma: How does a society temper unacceptable behavior without holding people responsible and accountable for their actions? And there's the rub.



Ongoing FCFS Activities

Dinners for Doubters: Sign up to attend or to host a dinner yourself. If a dinner is scheduled, sign-up sheets will be found at the back table at the monthly meetings. For details, **see the website**, <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>, or **ask a greeter** at the back table, at a meeting.

Second Harvest Second Saturday: On the **2nd Saturday of every month**, 10:00 a.m. to noon, join FCFS members and JAM (Jacksonville Atheist Meetup) group members, to volunteer at the Second Harvest North Florida food bank warehouse, 1502 Jessie Street, to help distribute food to the less fortunate in North FL. See <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org> or call Fed Hill, 904-358-3610.

Secular Sunday Morning in the Park: Freethinkers, let's get acquainted and enjoy intelligent conversation the **4th Sunday of every month** (unless inclement weather prevails) at 10 a.m. until ? under the pavilion at Losco Park, 10851 Hood Rd., S., Jacksonville 32257, between Shad and Losco Roads. For directions, call Beth Perry at 904-733-5489 or Google the address. We generally provide coffee. Bring a breakfast snack and **a chair or two**. Note, if it's too hot under the pavilion, we take our chairs to some trees with a nice breeze. Mark your calendar. We hope to see you there!

Caring Tree: If a telephone call, flowers, or a sympathy card to a member is in order, please contact **Judy Hankins** at 904-724-8188, or e-mail her at info@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org.

First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 550591
Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591
904-419-8826
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Statement of Purpose

The First Coast Freethought Society, Inc. is an educational, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization dedicated to supporting nonreligious persons in the Northeast Florida area and promoting a nontheistic approach to everyday life.

Meetings

The FCFS meets the THIRD Monday of each month at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Jacksonville, upstairs in the sanctuary, 7405 Arlington Expressway, Jacksonville, Florida 32211, (904) 725-8133. Meeting time: 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Meetings are free and open to the public. Doors open at 6:00 p.m.

For other activities besides monthly meetings, please see the website, brochure, or newsletter!

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First Coast FreeThinker

The *First Coast FreeThinker* is published for all freethinkers and potential freethinkers. Nonmembers may receive the e-mail version indefinitely. Nonmembers may receive three hard-copy issues free, after which they must join the FCFS to continue to receive hard copy.

Readers are invited and encouraged to reprint our original materials provided they give credit to this publication. The officials of the FCFS are not responsible for opinions or other statements expressed in this newsletter. The *FreeThinker* is intended to convey ideas that stimulate thought and promote discussion on a variety of subjects.

Information for Contributors

We welcome submissions. Articles for consideration should be submitted via e-mail to the e-mail address shown below. Contributors who cannot submit manuscripts electronically may send them to Fred

Hill, 1817 Egner St., Jacksonville, FL 32206. The deadline for time-sensitive submissions is the THIRD SATURDAY of each month for the following month's issue.

We prefer articles no longer than 1,000 words. Longer articles will be evaluated in terms of whether their importance and degree of interest to our readers warrant publication.

All accepted manuscripts are subject to editorial modification. Our style guide is *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Manuscript submissions cannot be returned. Authors are responsible for the accuracy of all quotations and for supplying complete references where applicable.

E-mail Address for Submissions
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2012 Membership Application



Name		Date	
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E-mail address	Home phone	Business phone	
Occupation	Areas of interest and/or expertise		
How did you hear about us? Comments? _____			

Membership level (please select one):

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regular (\$30/yr.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Carl Sagan (\$50/yr.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Charles Darwin (\$200/yr.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student (\$15/yr.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Bertrand Russell (\$75/yr.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Robert Ingersoll (\$500/yr.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior - 65+ (\$15/yr.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Thomas Paine (\$100/yr.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime (\$1,000) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family (\$45/yr.) | | |

Do you object to your name appearing on our membership list, distributed to other members? Yes No

I'm interesting in getting involved in the FCFS as a(n):

- General member Committee member Officer Financial supporter

- Annual dues cover the period of **January 1 through December 31**.
- The initial dues for new members joining in **July through September** are half the regular rates. Membership extends to the end of the current calendar year.
- The initial dues for new members joining in **October through December** are the full, regular rates. Membership extends to the end of the following calendar year.

***You can make a lasting impact on the future of
freethought and secular humanism in this community
...if you provide for the First Coast Freethought Society in your Will.***

Your bequest will ensure that the FCFS continues to be a beacon for freethinkers on the First Coast and to remain a vital Voice of Reason in the Northeast Florida area. Several options are available for establishing a bequest (specific, percentage, residual, or contingent). We will be happy to provide the appropriate wording to you and your attorney, depending upon your wishes.

For further information, contact
Carrie Renwick, P.O. Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591 or
904-419-8826 • CarrieRen@att.net • <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>
All inquiries are held in the strictest confidence.

Upcoming Freethought Events of Interest on the First Coast

Monday	October 15	FCFS Monthly Meeting, Jacksonville - 6:30 p.m.
Tuesday	October 23	FCFS Monthly Social at Olive Garden, Jacksonville - 6:00 p.m.
Sunday	October 28	FCFS Secular Sunday in the Park, Jacksonville - 10:00 a.m.
Sunday	Nov. 4	FCFS Humanist Book Discussion Group, Jacksonville - 2:00 p.m.
Saturday	Nov. 10	FCFS/JAM Volunteer at Second Harvest - 10 a.m.
Monday	Nov. 12	JAM Meetup at European Street Café in San Marco - 6:30 p.m.
Saturday	Nov. 17	FCFS Deadline to submit articles for Dec. 2012 <i>FreeThinker</i>
Monday	Nov. 19	FCFS Monthly Meeting, Jacksonville - 6:30 p.m.

First Coast Freethought Society (FCFS) • <http://www.firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/>
Jacksonville Atheist, Agnostic, Secular Meetup Group (JAM) • <http://www.jaxatheists.com/>
Northeast Florida Coalition of Reason (NeFCoR) • <http://NorthEastFloridaCoR.org/>

**The FCFS is a proud member of the Humanists of Florida Association
and the Northeast Florida Coalition of Reason.**

Meet Our October Speaker: Rabbi Merrill Shapiro

Carrie Renwick

Rabbi Merrill Shapiro grew up in Bloomfield, northern New Jersey, and studied Electrical Engineering at both Cornell University and Newark College of Engineering (now New Jersey Institute of Technology). He became a student at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and was identified as an educational leader by the Melton Research Center for Jewish Education and sent to lead its pilot school in Columbus, Ohio. Recognized as a Senior Educator in North America, Shapiro was awarded a Pincus Fellowship to study and serve as a graduate research assistant at Jerusalem's Hebrew University. While in Jerusalem, he completed his Rabbinic studies. He returned to this country where he has continued to educate and lead for many years. Rabbi Shapiro currently serves as the spiritual leader of Temple Shalom of Deltona, in Volusia County. He is also the President of the National Board of Trustees of Americans United for Separation of Church and State.



It is in this capacity that nationally-known activist Rabbi Shapiro will be speaking to us tonight in his talk titled, "Where's the 'Freedom' in Ballot Amendment 8, *The Florida Religious Freedom Amendment?*" In addition to being a crucially important issue to all Floridians, Rabbi Shapiro observes, "Ballot Amendment 8 is a wonderful vehicle to gaining important insights into the workings of the Florida State legislature! ...it is the amendment that keeps on giving!"

