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January 2015

Volume 14, Issue 1

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January 2015 Meeting

- **What:** FCFS Monthly Meeting
- **Who:** Scott Shine, Duval County School Board Member
- **Title:** "Common Core and Education Reform: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly"
- **When:** Monday, January 19, 2015, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (doors open at 6:00)

- **Where:** Buckman Bridge Unitarian Church, 8447 Manresa Ave., Jacksonville, FL 32244
(From the I-295 Roosevelt exit, go north to the first traffic light, Collins Rd. Turn right. Go 400 ft. The church driveway will be on your right.)

Meetings Free and Open to the Public • Plenty of Free Parking

Meeting Description

Scott Shine will take an objective look at Common Core and High Stakes Testing in a public education environment undergoing unprecedented reform.

About the Speaker

Scott Shine was elected to the Duval County School Board in November of 2014. He is a Jacksonville businessman who has held management positions with Blue Cross Blue Shield, Barnett Bank, Nemours Children's Clinic, and Bank of America. Shine's business background is focused on communications, research, and strategic planning. Shine attended and graduated from the public school system. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Virginia Commonwealth University.

He has served in several leadership positions with the City of Jacksonville, including being a member of the Jacksonville Ethics Commission, and is a current member of the Jacksonville Waterways Commission. Shine has also held advisory positions with the City, including the District 2 Visioning Committee, Huguenot Park Advisory Board, Huguenot Shorebird Management Team, and has been an Ex-Officio Member of the Downtown Development Review Board.

He is active with several local nonprofit groups and is a past board member of the Youth Crisis Center. Shine is a volunteer educator with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, where he is a certified instructor, teaching youth and people of all ages about safety in the outdoors. He is also a certified USA Archery Instructor. Shine, 54, lives in the beaches area with his wife of 20 years, Tibby Shine, and their son, Jacob, who attends Duval County Public School.



January President's Message - FCFS Scores with Folio Weekly!

Earl Coggins

The headline on the front page of the December 17 - 23 edition of *Folio Weekly* boldly declares, "100 THINGS TO DO IN NORTHEAST FLORIDA BEFORE YOU DIE." The top twenty "things to do" were a mixed bag of endeavors, some good, some not-so-good. Below are my favorite eight of the top twenty.

I would love to be a zookeeper for a day at the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens (No. 2). I love being around animals, maybe not the ones that want to kill me and dine on my flesh. I especially like birds. I spoke to a group of seminary students a few years ago as part of a program to acquaint the students with diverse worldviews, mine being atheism. During the Q & A, one student asked me if reincarnation turns out to be true, what would I choose to "come back" as. It was a no-brainer for me. I told them, a bird.



Number 6 of the top twenty has always been a favorite thing for me to do in Northeast Florida: Visit Kingsley Plantation. I like it, but it brings up creepy thoughts of humans owning humans. I get around those thoughts by telling myself the plantation is there to remind us all of the fallibility of human beings.

I love the music festivals at the Suwannee River Music Park (No. 9) and the park's proximity to the Suwannee River. The opportunity to listen to great music and take walks under a canopy of live oaks is much more pleasing than an indoor setting, not to mention the opportunity to go kayaking on the Suwannee River.

I've walked the Big Talbot Island driftwood forest (No. 12). If you like driftwood and walking on beaches, this is the ultimate walk on the beach. Go at low tide. Last time I went, it was at night during a full moon, and the tide was coming in. It was fun, even though I had to do some wading.

Number 15 is probably my second favorite of my favorites among the top twenty. The riverfront garden at the Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens is tranquil and can easily inspire a meditative moment.

**The Cummer Museum of Art
and Gardens, in Jacksonville**



Number 18 brought back a ton of memories for me. One of my favorite dining experiences back in the '70s after a long day of surfing was a camel rider sandwich and a cherry limeade. My friends and I would walk in with salt clinging to our tan bodies and sun bleached hair, wearing nothing but surf baggies, a Sunrise Surf Shop t-shirt, and a pair of flip flops. That experience felt just like dying and going to... The Sheik Sandwich Shop. And you thought I was going to say something else, didn't you?

I don't surf much anymore, but I replaced that pastime with the next best thing—kayaking. Number 19 on the list is the very best way to experience kayaking for the first time. Kayaking with an outfitter frees you from the research, decisions, kayak rental or purchase, and other headaches of being a first-timer to that way of life. I say "that way of life" instead of sport because it can very easily become just that. It did for me. Kayaking allows me to be on the water, something of a primal need for me. It also allows me to experience nature in a way I can't on a hiking trail or camping in the woods. I get to see animals from all walks of life. I have seen all kinds of life in the rivers and springs of Florida and the Atlantic Ocean. I have seen many birds and plenty of land animals, all while paddling these pristine waterways.

Earl kayaking in Key Largo, Florida



So there are my favorite eight of the top twenty. Oh, wait a minute. That was only seven. We need to back up to No. 14. *Folio Weekly* says the top 100 are in no particular order. I think they put my favorite thing to do in Northeast Florida in the top twenty because it is truly worthy of being there. **The No.14 thing to do in Northeast Florida before you die is: Go to a First Coast Freethought Society meeting! That's right!** *Folio Weekly* threw us IN the bus, not UNDER it. Way cool. It is an honor to be chosen.

The credit for that honor goes to all of the members, speakers, and friends of the First Coast Freethought Society, but especially the members. Without our membership, there would be no First Coast Freethought Society. This little organization is literally standing on the shoulders of giants, and by giants I mean our

membership. The members have enabled the FCFS, through support, volunteerism, membership dues, and fund raising donations, to become a leader in our community. We are one of the few local organizations in this city leading the way down a path to reason, compassion, and knowledge.

Membership Year

The FCFS membership year runs from January to December, so now is the time for everyone to renew. Please renew your membership or, if you are not a member already, please join the First Coast Freethought Society. Together we can keep the First Coast Freethought Society a voice of reason on Florida's First Coast. Let's keep making a difference.

To renew or join online

Click to Join, Renew, Donate: <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/cms/support>

To renew or join by mail

Send your check, payable to the FCFS, to PO Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591. If you're joining for the first time, or if any of your contact info has changed, please print a membership application <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/cms/app> and include it with your check.

To view the "To-Do List" in *Folio*

Click here <http://folioweekly.com/100-THINGS-YOU-MUST-DO-IN-JACKSONVILLE-BEFORE-YOU-DIE.11802>

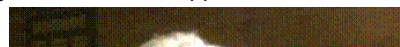
January Olive Garden Social

- **Where:** OLIVE GARDEN on Philips Highway, across from the Avenues Mall. The hostesses will know where we are seated. Proceed directly to our room.
- **When:** Tuesday, **JANUARY 27**, 2015, at 6:00 p.m. Social hour at 6:00. Dinner at 7:00. We order from the menu.
- **RSVP:** E-mail CarrieRen@att.net (or call 904-268-8826) by Tuesday morning, if you plan to attend!

Happy New Year?

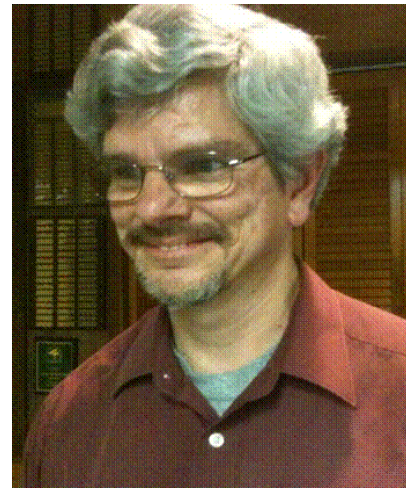
Fred W. Hill

Each year begins with much well-wishing. Happy New Year! We never know what the next 12 months will bring, but aside from the perpetually morbid, we hope it will bring at least some happiness. As it was, there was cause for much sorrow in 2014 –the loss of beloved kin,



good friends, even a pet, marked the year for me, and many others suffered similar losses. There was also some cause for joy, in sharing good times with friends and family in particular. So yes, there was some balance—some intense sadness, but also some happiness in the year gone by.

Admittedly, I've never been an abundantly cheerful person. Sometimes I feel overwhelmed by angst. Too many atrocities happening all over the world. Too many past examples of humans behaving abominably towards each other and to other animals and to the environment. Too many things to worry about from the personal to the global levels. Maybe a mad axe-man will break into my house, or a massive asteroid will slam into our home planet and we will all suffer the fate of the dinosaurs. Angry New Year! Sometimes I have to escape into fantasy to avoid sinking into gloom.



The one fantasy that has never worked for me, however, is that some all-powerful deity will make everything all right. Oh, I can understand how that apparently works for most people around the world. Someone's dropped a bomb on your house and killed your entire family? Rejoice! They're in Heaven and waiting for you! And don't fret if those who made you suffer appear to get away with it – after all, your god is a righteous god and he will make them pay for all eternity in the afterlife! And if you're poor, you can't find a job, can't get enough to eat, have to sleep outside on a sidewalk on a freezing night – just have faith and God will provide for all His children, even when there are 50 billion of them! Yes, I can see how others might find solace in that sort of magical thinking. But to me it's as absurd as believing that a big fat elf who lives on the North Pole delivers presents to all the good little boys and girls, and lumps of coal to all the big bad ones, all over the globe in one night – at least as long as they have a home with a chimney and remember to douse out the flame before going to bed. No, Virginia, you silly girl, there isn't a Santa Claus. Bah, humbug!



Saint Nick on a bender, not coping well with the reality of his non-existence.

My religious relatives and acquaintances might respond that it is all so terribly sad that I have not seen the light as they have, and my lack of faith explains my incapacity to experience more bliss in my life. Truth be told, some of them are rather dour themselves, and others have been no strangers to depression despite their religious devotion, while at least a few appear so near orgasm at the mere thought of being next to Jesus in the afterlife that it's a wonder they haven't taken a good dosage of hemlock to hasten their union with their lord in the hereafter. But having been instructed that suicide is a sin that will land them in hot water with devils stabbing their rumps with pointy tridents, they are content to stay put in this earthly vale of tears, writhing and speaking in tongues as the Holy Ghost moves them.

One morning last November, just before the start of working hours, I opened the door to the break room in my department to find several co-workers huddled in a circle and wailing ecstatically, "oh, yes, Jesus, you are worthy, yes you are, oh, please, Jesus" It seemed like a surreal scene from a dream except that I was very much awake. I just smiled, walked past them to put my lunch in the refrigerator, got myself some coffee, and exited. If that makes them happy and they aren't harming anyone, all fine and dandy for them, but I'll be damned rather than join in. Literally damned if there was any veracity to their beliefs. Fortunately, that wasn't the start of a new routine, otherwise I'd have taken to scowling at having to deal with religious mania every morning on the job.

Religious devotees reputedly in the insubstantial grasp of the holy ghost.



It all reeks of make-believe, refusing to face reality. Fantasy may provide a safe haven on occasion, but it's not a good place to dwell indefinitely. Eventually we have to leave the theater, turn off the TV, or close the book and leave the hobbits, goblins, vampires, superheroes, gods, angels, devils and all other creatures of our imaginations behind. Humanity needs to wake up from its fevered dreams of savior gods and recognize that we have to deal with our problems ourselves. More and more people are doing so, but still far too few.

Today, as I worked on this article, only one week into the new year, I heard news of the latest terrorist atrocity – 12 staff members of a French satirical newspaper, Charlie Hebdo, were murdered at their job by fanatics with guns, who apparently felt it was their god-appointed duty to slay anyone who mocks their god and prophet. A reminder that religious fervor is not always something to smile about.

Earlier this week came word that Earl Coggins, our society's founder and president, and a good friend and great co-host, along with Susan Ert-Ker, of many an educational and delightful philosophy meet-up and dinner party, had been hospitalized and undergone emergency abdominal surgery. Happily, he appears to be recovering well and should be home by the time this sees print. I'm sure I echo the feelings of everyone in the freethought community in wishing Earl a quick return to good health and all the many things he enjoys doing.



"Just remember, kid, in just one year you'll look as old as I do."

There is horror and much uncertainty in life. But we can also find many sources of joy, and all without losing our capacity to think for ourselves, without seeking solace in eternally silent supernatural beings. Joy to the world, the lord won't come, but the birds still sing. No savior reigns. We are on our own. Perhaps that is too frightening for some to bear. But I can do well without their god, and "get by with a little help from my friends," to quote one of my favorite bands. There will be cause for more tears, but also for more happiness, in allowing ourselves to be open to the good that does exist and in trying to expand on the good rather than sink into the bad. Happy New Year.

All Membership Dues for 2015 Are Due in January

Judy Hankins, Membership Chair

Reminder! The First Coast Freethought Society membership year runs from **January to December**. Therefore, **ALL MEMBERSHIPS** are due for renewal in the month of **January**. Here are your options.

- Renew on the FCFS website by clicking <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/cms/support> and using PayPal or a credit card.
- Mail a check to the First Coast Freethought Society, PO Box 550591, Jacksonville, Florida 32255-0591.
- Renew at a meeting using a check, a credit card, or cash.

If your contact info has changed, please include an application with your check. Here's the link to our application, <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/cms/app>. Remember also, multiple **levels of membership** are available should you choose.

All membership dues and donations are tax-deductible, and you will receive a letter from the treasurer to that effect for IRS purposes.



Local AU Update

In this regular feature, you will be kept apprised of the actions of the local AU chapters which include the AU of Northeast Florida (Jacksonville) and the Clay County Chapter. If separation of church and state issues are important to you, we encourage you to join Americans United, on the local and national levels.

The Wheels of Progress Move, But Slowly

There is bad news and good news. The bad is that Clay Yarbrough, City Council President, appears to have no intentions of allowing any but explicitly Christian prayers at Jacksonville City

Council meetings. The good is, if Jacksonville citizens, along with AU members, participate in a sustained campaign to stop the lack of inclusion of any but explicitly Christian prayers at Jacksonville City Council meetings, we can stop the exclusionary practice.

AU Urges Jacksonville Citizens to Take Action

The AU of Northeast Florida met recently and decided the **United Not Divided** campaign needs citizens to attend council meetings and sign up to speak for 3 minutes about the exclusionary invocations at City Council meetings. AU also needs citizens to write letters to the *Florida Times-Union* and *Folio Weekly* newspapers regarding the exclusionary invocations at City Council meetings, and equally important, contact the City Council about this issue via emails, letters, or phone calls.

AU of Northeast Florida is urging citizens sympathetic to the **United Not Divided** campaign to request to give an invocation at a City Council meeting. Anyone volunteering to speak at a City Council meeting should contact the local AU chapter at au.ne.fl@gmail.com so that arrangements can be made to have volunteers accompanied by AU board members.

United Not Divided

Thanks to everyone who has already signed the petition! We have over 500 signatures but we want 1000. If you have not yet signed the petition, or joined the Facebook campaign, here is the information you need.

Sign the Petition

The first component of the **United Not Divided** campaign is a **petition** you can sign. We are urging everyone who cares about this issue to sign the petition and share the link to the petition with your friends and family. To sign the petition, click:

<http://www.change.org/p/sign-our-petition-in-the-name-of-unity>

Facebook Campaign

The second component of the **United Not Divided** campaign is Facebook. You can send a friend request to the Northeast Florida Chapter of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State's Facebook page dedicated to the City Council Invocation issue. Please share this Facebook page link with your friends, family, and anyone you think would want to support this cause. Or, simply go to the Facebook page and add yourself to it. Raise your voice with ours, as we call upon the City Council of Jacksonville to discontinue a practice that divides us, favors some of us over others, and tears apart the fabric of our community!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/uniteustocareaboutourcity/>

To Join AU on the Local or National Level

Local: <http://www.meetup.com/AU-Americans-United-for-Separation-of-Church-and-State/>

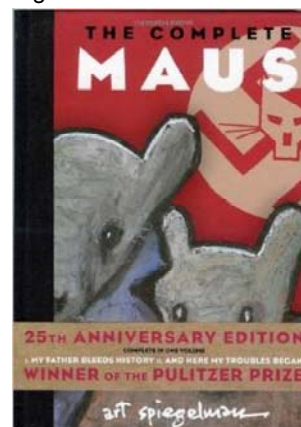
National: <https://support.au.org/donate>



Humanist Book Discussion Group - Jacksonville

- **When:** 2:00 - 3:30 p.m., the first Sunday of each month.
- **Where:** Books-A-Million, 9400 Atlantic Boulevard, Jacksonville, FL 32225.
- **What:** Books planned for discussion:
 - February 1, 2015 - *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, volumes I and/or II, by Art Spiegelman
 - March 1, 2015 - *Tending the Epicurean Garden*, by Hiram Crespo

"[Maus] is the story of Vladek Spiegelman, a Jewish survivor of Hitler's Europe, and his son, a cartoonist coming to terms with his father's story. Maus approaches the unspeakable through the diminutive. Its form, the cartoon (the Nazis are cats, the Jews mice), shocks us out of any lingering sense of familiarity. Maus is a haunting tale within a tale. Vladek's harrowing story of survival is woven into the author's account of his tortured relationship with his aging father. Against the backdrop of guilt brought by survival, they stage a normal life of small arguments and unhappy visits. This astonishing retelling of our century's grisliest news is a story of survival, not only of Vladek but of the children who survive even the survivors. Maus studies the bloody pawprints of history and tracks its meaning for all of us." -- From the Publisher's description.



Link to Book Review:

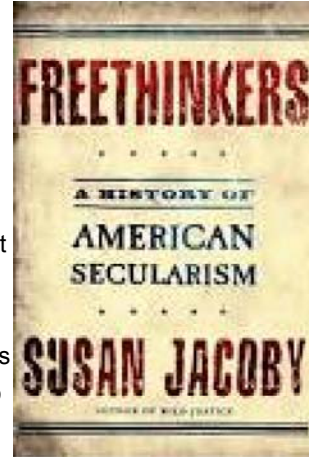
<http://www.nytimes.com/books/98/12/06/specials/spiegelman-maus2.html>

For More Info: Contact Herb Gerson at 12herbert30gerson@bellsouth.net, or call 904-363-6446.

Humanist Book Discussion Group - St. Augustine

- **When:** 7:00 - 8:30 p.m., the second Thursday of each month.
- **Where:** Clubhouse at a private condominium in St. Augustine (Anastasia Island).
- **What:** Book planned for discussion:
 - February 12, 2015 - *Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism*, by Susan Jacoby
 - March 12, 2015 - *The Great Debate*, by Yuval Levin

At a time when the separation of church and state is under attack as never before, *Freethinkers* offers a powerful defense of the secularist heritage that gave Americans the first government in the world founded not on the authority of religion but on the bedrock of human reason. In impassioned, elegant prose, celebrated author Susan Jacoby traces more than two hundred years of secularist activism, beginning with the fierce debate over the omission of God from the Constitution. Moving from nineteenth-century abolitionism and suffragism through the twentieth century's civil liberties, civil rights, and feminist movements, *Freethinkers* illuminates the neglected achievements of secularists who, allied with tolerant believers, have led the battle for reform in the past and today.



Rich with such iconic figures as Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Paine, and the once-famous Robert Green Ingersoll, *Freethinkers* restores to history the passionate humanists who struggled against those who would undermine the combination of secular government and religious liberty that is the glory of the American system.

Link to Book Review: <http://skepdic.com/refuge/jacoby.html>

More Info: Contact Bill Stroop at bill@strooplaw.com for address, directions, and gate code.

NOTE TO ALL! Books may be found in the library, purchased from local book stores or 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.

Giving Cancer (A Skit on the Lighter Side of Lobbying)

Joque H. Soskis

LOBBYIST: "Thank you for seeing me, Senator. I know how busy you are."

SENATOR: "Glad to welcome you to my offices. Wonderful contribution you made to my campaign, and to my....uh..... I mean that PAC, by the way."



"So, what brings you to Capitol Hill today?"

LOBBYIST: "Well, Senator, we have, and by we I mean the majority of the players in the pharmaceutical industry, we have hit upon a marvelous new idea that will bring great benefits to us, and by us I mean our industry and, of course, our people and our country."

SENATOR: "This sound wonderful. Give me the broad outlines."



LOBBYIST: "OK, the idea is this. We have been frustrated for some time by our inability to find a cure for cancer, let alone a vaccine. So a couple of years ago we quietly shifted to trying to find a way to give people cancer, not something slow and only partially effective, like smoking or exposure to industrial carcinogens, but something quick and reliable that could be administered easily in the field. Within the last few months, we have finally succeeded, and have more than one substance that is ready for general application."

SENATOR: "Wait a minute. You think it is a good idea to give people cancer?"



A cancerous growth in Congress

LOBBYIST: "I have to admit, we didn't see the potential of it at first ourselves. But gradually it dawned on us what a wonderful opportunity this represents. First, of course, there is a modest fee for getting cancer from one of our preparations. Now, if you have already obtained cancer on your own somehow, that's fine, but with everyone else paying the fee to get it, that comes to some real money. Also, none of our preparations works 100% of the time on the first administration. Sometimes it takes three or even four doses. Each time with the fee, of course.

"Then, once the person has cancer, there is the profit from the drugs to fight the cancer, and the profit for doctors, hospitals and cancer centers, then rehab and hospice organizations, and then finally providers of funeral services. It's a fantastic boondoggle!"

SENATOR: "I...I...I,...., uh...., I don't know about this. I think a lot of people are going to be horrified by the idea of intentionally giving someone cancer (though I'll wager there would be more than few who will want to suggest some names). Don't you think you are going to get a lot of push-back on this?"

LOBBYIST: "Yes, that worried us, too. But consider this: there would be literally hundreds and hundreds of thousands of jobs created. Far more than that Keystone Pipeline thing. First, we will need a huge number of workers to take our preparations into the field and administer them. Then there will be all the

jobs connected with diagnosing which cancer people got, and staging it, and treating it, and burying the patients when they die, counseling and antidepressants for the surviving loved ones. And so on and so forth. Jobs by the millions! Believe me, Senator, Americans will sit still for anything if you promise them that it will create jobs."

NPR Corporate Sponsorship

Carrie Renwick, Fundraising Chair

The First Coast Freethought Society annual summer fundraising campaign to keep our National Public Radio (NPR) announcements about the FCFS and our monthly meetings on radio station WJCT, 89.9 FM, has closed - meaning, I won't contact you until next summer. However, for your convenience, this information listing the different ways to donate will continue to appear in the newsletter. We would love to see NPR contributions come in throughout the year!

To Donate on a Monthly Basis

You can now set up automatic monthly donations which you may find very convenient and easy on the budget. You can do this in two different ways.

1. Go to the FCFS website home page, <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>, where you will find a PayPal button to make an automatic monthly donation to our NPR fund. Automatic monthly donations via PayPal require you to have a PayPal account.
2. Set it up through your online banking system.

To Donate on a One-Time Basis

Should you prefer to donate on a one-time basis, here are the ways.

1. Visit the website, <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>, where you will find the opportunity to contribute on our homepage. You can pay via PayPal or with any major credit card (via PayPal).
2. Mail a check payable to the FCFS to PO Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255.
3. Bring your contribution to a meeting or another FCFS event and give it to a board member.

Whichever method you select, you will receive a letter from the treasurer, suitable for your IRS records, acknowledging your tax-deductible contribution.

Thank you!

Many thanks to our contributors. Please keep our NPR corporate sponsorship goals in mind throughout the year. Heartfelt thanks to those of you who plan to contribute in the coming months. You can rest assured that you are supporting what may well be the most significant project the FCFS ever undertakes for the community and for the cause of the freethought movement. Thank you!

This is a Text Block. Use this to provide text...

About our newsletter, the *First Coast FreeThinker*

Information for Readers

The First Coast FreeThinker is published for all freethinkers and potential freethinkers. Nonmembers and members 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. Members are entitled to receive hard-copy should they prefer. The e-mail version is encouraged, as the newsletter is optimized for on-screen reading.

Readers are invited and encouraged to share 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, poetry, etc., should be e-mailed to Editor@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org. Material may be submitted only ELECTRONICALLY. Submissions may be formatted in MS Word, in a text file, or cut and pasted into an e-mail.

The deadline for time-sensitive material is the THIRD SATURDAY of each month for the following month's issue, but submissions are welcome anytime.

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.

Subject matter must tie in with [freethought](#) or with the [Affirmations of Humanism: A Statement of Principles](#) (found on our website). All accepted submissions are subject to editorial modification. Our style guide is *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Authors (not the First Coast Freethought Society) are responsible for the accuracy of all quotations and for supplying complete references where applicable.

Why I Am an Atheist - Humanist - Freethinker See Your Name Here!

The Editorial Committee has long observed that stories of previously-religious folks becoming nonreligious and subsequently "coming out of the closet" are always well received and garner positive feedback. The Editorial Committee hereby invites you to tell us YOUR story, and we'll publish it here, in what we'd like to see become a regular feature of our newsletter: "Why I am an

atheist, humanist, freethinker... whatever fits you. Submit your story to
Editor@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org.

Don't be shy! Each of us has a story to tell. If we are involved with the FCFS, there is a story behind our evolution to freethought. Some stories may be similar, some may have significant differences. But all are interesting! If you don't consider yourself a writer, maybe you should give it a shot, anyway. Someone would be happy to give you a hand with it, if you like, just ask Fred or Carrie. --The Editorial Committee

About the First Coast Freethought Society



First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.

P.O. Box 550591

Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591

904-419-8826

<http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>

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.

Membership

If you share our world view and would like to be a part of the FCFS, we encourage you to join. If you are new, or if you are renewing and your contact info has changed, you can pick up an application or a brochure at a meeting, or you can download and print an application on our website: <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/cms/app> and mail it in.

- You can join online: <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/cms/support>
- You can join by mail: Send your application and check, payable to the FCFS, to PO Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591.

Meetings

The FCFS meets the THIRD Monday of each month at the Buckman Bridge Unitarian Universalist Church, 8447 Manresa Ave., Jacksonville, FL 32244.

Directions: From the I-295 Roosevelt exit, go north to the first traffic light, Collins Rd. Turn right. Go 400 feet. The church driveway will be on your right.

Meeting time: 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. Meetings are free and open to the public.

Other Activities

- Two monthly humanist book discussion groups, one in Jacksonville and one in St. Augustine. Current books are listed in each newsletter. For further details, visit <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/cms/bdg>.
- A monthly social and dinner at the Olive Garden. See details in each newsletter.
- Coffee and conversation in the fresh air on a monthly basis at Secular Sunday in the Park. We meet the fourth Sunday of each month, 10:00 a.m. to noon, at Losco Regional Park, 10851 Hood Road South, Jax, 32257. See Activities section of the FCFS home page: <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/cms/>.
- Dinners for Doubters (when scheduled).
- Volunteer opportunity on a monthly basis at Dignity U Wear. Visit <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/cms/component/content/article/50/150>, currently scheduled for the third Saturday morning of each month, through December 2015.
- A freethought Yahoo! Group. To subscribe, send a blank message to jaxfreethought-subscribe@yahogroups.com.

For information on all these activities, please visit <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>, or see the calendar of events at the end of each newsletter and on the website. You need not be a member to attend these activities!

FCFS 2015 Board Members

President - Earl Coggins: 904-521-5039

Vice President - Carrie Renwick: 904-268-8826

Secretary - Liz DuClose: 352-260-2880

Treasurer - Stephen Peek: 904-742-5390

At-Large - Herb Gerson: 904-363-6446

At-Large - Fred Hill: 904-358-3610

At Large - John Ruskuski: 904-419-8826

Other Appointments

Parliamentarian - Mark Renwick: 904-616-2896

E-mail Secretary - Carrie Renwick: 904-268-8826

Committees and Chairs

Editorial - Fred Hill: 904-358-3610

Community Outreach - Celia Abbruzzese: 904-982-8431

Finance - Stephen Peek: 904-742-5390

Fundraising - Carrie Renwick: 904-268-8826

Membership - Judy Hankins: 904-724-8188

Publicity - Carrie Renwick: 904-268-8826

Website - Mark Renwick: 904-616-2896

All FCFS personnel may be reached via e-mail at

info@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org

February 2015 Meeting

Carrie Renwick, Program Chair

Every February, we celebrate Charles Darwin's remarkable contribution to our understanding of science, as February is Darwin's birth month. On Monday, February 16, we will welcome Jacksonville University's Jeremy Stalker, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Marine Science. Dr. Stalker will present a "trip through time" which will include some dinosaur evolution and locomotion, geology, some "scientific mechanics," and some dinosaur-to-bird science. We think Darwin would be pleased!

Bequests

*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 can provide the appropriate wording to you and your attorney, depending upon your wishes. Or, just talk to your attorney. Our EIN is 20-1462737.

For further information, contact

Carrie Renwick, PO Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591 or
904-419-8826 • CarrieRen@att.net • <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>

All inquiries are held in the strictest confidence.

Northeast Florida Coalition of Reason

- First Coast Freethought Society: <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>
- Jacksonville Atheist, Agnostic, Secular Meetup Group (JAM): <http://jaxatheists.com>
- Secular Saint Augustine (SSA): <http://meetup.com/Secular-Saint-Augustine>

The FCFS is a proud member of the [Florida Humanist Association](#) (formerly the Humanists of Florida Association).



Freethought Events on the First Coast

- Monday, January 12 - JAM Session, 6:30 p.m. (See <http://www.meetup.com/jaxatheists/> for details.)
- Monday, January 19 - FCFS Monthly Meeting at Buchman Bridge UU Church - 6:30 p.m.
- Friday, January 16 - [Secular St. Augustine Meetup](#) - St. Augustine, 7:00 p.m. (Meetups are generally the third Friday, but you need to visit website to RSVP and for meeting details.)
- Saturday, January 17- Volunteer at Dignity U Wear, Jacksonville - 9:00 a.m.
- Saturday, January 24 - FCFS January 2015 Newsletter Deadline
- Sunday, January 25 - FCFS Secular Sunday in the Park, Jacksonville, 10:00 a.m.
- Tuesday, January 27 - FCFS Monthly Social at Olive Garden, Jacksonville, 6:00 p.m.
- Sunday, February 1 - Humanist Book Discussion Group - Jacksonville, 2:00 p.m.
- Monday, February 9 - JAM Session, 6:30 p.m. (See <http://www.meetup.com/jaxatheists/> for details.)
- Thursday, February 12 - Humanist Book Discussion Group - St. Augustine, Anastasia Island, 7:00 p.m.
- Monday, February 16 - FCFS Monthly Meeting at Buchman Bridge UU Church - 6:30 p.m.

Directions to Monthly Meeting at BBUUC

Our monthly meetings are held at the **Buckman Bridge Unitarian Universalist Church (BBUUC)**, 8447 Manresa Ave., Jacksonville, FL 32244. The address is Manresa, but the main entrance to the church is located on Collins Rd..

- From I-295, take the Roosevelt exit. Go north on Roosevelt Blvd. to the first traffic light which is Collins Rd. Turn right onto Collins. Go 400 feet. The main entrance to the church is located on Collins Rd., on the right.
- Going south on Roosevelt, look for Atlantic Self-Storage on the left. This is the Collins Rd. intersection. Turn left onto Collins. Go 400 feet. The main entrance to the church is on Collins Rd., on the right. (If you come to I-295, you've gone too far, turn around, and you will turn right onto Collins Rd.)

MAP ON FCFS WEBSITE

See accurate map at this link: http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/cms/lib/fcfs_bbuuc_map.gif (Please note, Google Maps, as well as other maps, may not be consistent with the actual street signs.)

Membership Application



Use this PDF form

or join on our [website](#).

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