

From the Coordinator -

I'm very pleased to present the first issue of MadCoR Chronicles.

The first issue introduces MadCoR and highlights the founding groups, as well as additional groups and friends that have joined the Coalition to date.

Madison and the surrounding communities are home to many nontheists who maintain diverse worldviews and interests. This newsletter was developed to promote positive aspects and events for the people and groups that make up the Coalition.

- Leslie

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Contact the [MadCoR Coordinator](mailto:madisonareacor@gmail.com)  
at [madisonareacor@gmail.com](mailto:madisonareacor@gmail.com)

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

## A COALITION IS FORMED

The Madison Area Coalition of Reason (MadCoR) is an informal association of groups in the greater Madison area who count themselves as part of our area's "community of reason". We are associated with the national United Coalition of Reason, which uses "community of reason" as a "generic term that includes all self-identified nontheistic organizations, whether they call themselves atheist, agnostic, bright, Ethical Culture, freethought, humanist, Pastafarian, rationalist, realist, skeptic, secularist, Unitarian Universalist, or whatever else".



Each member organization seeks to hold high the light of reason in its own way, with its own emphasis, atmosphere and structure. We invite you to explore all the groups listed on our Groups page or our website at [www.madcor.org](http://www.madcor.org). If you find one that interests you, use the link on that page to contact them. Our goal is to raise local awareness of our member organizations to help establish rewarding connections between groups and individuals who value a rational approach to the issues surrounding us in the world in which we find

Feel free to submit articles, pictures, comments, suggestions, or calendar events to [madisonareacor@gmail.com](mailto:madisonareacor@gmail.com).

(Please note: MadCoR reserves all rights to publish or not publish any submission to the newsletter.)



**Atheists and Agnostics of Wisconsin (AAW)** is one of Atheist Alliance International's member societies in Wisconsin, headquartered out of Madison. AAW exists almost entirely on line to give everyone in the state a chance to participate.

*Look for the official MadCoR launch coming late summer!*



## Atheists, Humanists & Agnostics-UW Madison

*By Chris Calvey*

The “Atheists, Humanists, & Agnostics” at UW-Madison was founded in 2005, however, the group began to flounder after several of the enthusiastic founding members graduated. Since 2009, I have begun the arduous (yet rewarding) task of rebuilding AHA back to its former glory.

No one wants to join a boring club. Atheist student groups that succeed are the ones which have a variety of engaging social, intellectual, volunteering, and other activities. Yet, in order to organize these events effectively, student organizations need a strong base of dedicated and passionate “officers.” In short, you need exciting events to attract new members, and you need a lot of excited members to organize new events! Two years ago, a few eager members stepped forward and with this small base of officers, we began to take on more activities and bigger events. In 2010 we were able to co-sponsor speaking events with Dan Barker, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, and Michael Shermer.

For student groups, by far the biggest opportunity for growth is the annual “Student Organization Fair.” Held early each fall, the Org Fair attracts thousands of freshmen interested in finding clubs to join. In 2012, the group will have a strong representation among the now sophomore class, and will have a new class of freshman to draw from. As you can imagine, this cycle will continue for four years until the original freshman have become seniors, and the club has had the opportunity to recruit members from four consecutive freshman classes.

AHA is still relatively early on within this growth model. We attended our first Org Fair in August of 2010, meaning that we still have 3 more cycles of growth to look forward to. Since 2009, our membership has tripled from a little over 100 to well over 400 members. As we recruit the next three classes of college freshman, I expect to see our ranks expand by at least 250 students every year for the next three years.

The future looks bright.

## Humanist Union of Madison

*By Ken Haydock and Bob Park*

The Humanist Union of Madison (“HUM”) is a wonderful, Madison-area resource: a showcase of current humanist thought and expression.

From a dozen to two dozen lively, articulate freethinkers gather just before noon on the first Sunday of each month at the Meeting House of the Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society (“Prairie”), hidden on a quiet, tree-lined residential street. HUM imposes no dues and its gatherings are always free and informal. They start with a potluck lunch, feature speakers ranging from nationally-recognized humanists to knowledgeable local residents, academic and otherwise, and conclude only after there’s been a chance to question the speaker and offer a wide range of candid observations and opinions.

Past speakers have included Lori Lipman Brown, Dan Barker and Annie Laurie Gaylor, Eugenie Scott, Ron Solomon, August Berkshire, Sean Faircloth, Professors Ronald Numbers and John Hawks (UW-Madison), and Fred Edwards, National Director of the United Coalition of Reason. Active participant Bob Park, a retired Wisconsin DNR air pollution engineer, presides, keeps the group up to speed on upcoming Madison events of interest to humanists, and records the programs for broadcast on a local low power radio station and for web posting.

HUM started as an informal discussion group and has remained relatively unstructured. It has co-sponsored or invited other groups’ participation in many events, including presenting speakers, viewing and discussing films, holding nonbelievers picnics, and (since 2005) sponsoring Madison’s annual HumanLight celebration.



## MadCoR Outreach

### Summer 2011



Visit us at the Dane County Farmer's Market on the Capitol Square - Corner of South Hamilton (weather permitting).

Stop by and visit or contact the MadCoR Coordinator to volunteer.



**Madison Skeptics** During the late fall of 2008 and winter of 2009, there was a "great minds think alike" moment when Jennifer Bunner and I both

started online social networking groups called the Madison Skeptics. Jennifer and I were both inspired by the great awakening of skeptical thinking which had taken over the zeitgeist in the previous couple of years.

Jennifer, along with Jackson Crawford, started a Meetup group and started getting inquiries almost immediately. I chose to use Facebook and in those more innocent days, Facebook allowed me quite a bit of latitude in searching for Madison-area people who might have similar interests. I searched out people who identified themselves as atheist, freethinker, nonbeliever or agnostic in their religious views; people who listed as favorite authors the likes of Dawkins, Harris, Dennett, Sagan or Shermer; people who identified interests in science advocacy and activism in combating nonsense like creationism, intelligent design, anti-vaccinationism and 911 truthers. I compiled a list of a few hundred Facebook members and sent out a feeler message to see if anyone was interested in meeting to discuss our skeptical and scientific interests.

The response was overwhelmingly positive, and included a note from Jennifer letting me know that she was already well down the path I was attempting to blaze. We immediately joined forces and the Madison Skeptics was born of coffee-house meetings, social events, restaurant get-togethers and library lecture series. For that first year and a-half, we met frequently (as much as twice a month at first) but later on, monthly or even every other month. I made many new friends and was hugely encouraged by these meetings. There seemed to be a significant amount of pent-up desire to congregate and meet with like minded individuals. The skeptical movement in Madison and surrounding areas continues to percolate and evolve.

When the opportunity to join the local Coalition of Reason (CoR) arose, Madison Skeptics saw it as a natural way to connect with other like-minded groups and advance the cause of reason and rationality in our area. MadCoR, as it will evidently be known, will attempt to leverage publicity (billboards and other advertising avenues) to gain attention and support in our area for the cause of reason. Madison Skeptics are excited to be a part of this coalition.

*By John Rummel*

## VERUSONO

*By Alfonso*

**Verusono** encourages the growth of atheism and freethought in communities, concentrating at a grassroots level. We host parties, work with neighborhood groups, share knowledge and speak openly and positively about living without a belief in god. Visit our site and please contact us for information on upcoming community events!

<http://blog.verusono.com/>



The **Secular Student Alliance of University of Wisconsin - Whitewater** was founded in November of 2010 and is an affiliate of the International SSA. The presence of SSA of UWW on campus generated instant interest and energized the dormant secular community. This was the first year of existence for the SSA-UW-

Whitewater, and it wasn't even a full year at that, but there was still much fun to be had and many things to be done. We accomplished quite a few activities and established our future internal leadership. We took part in Make-A-Difference Day, a day where hundreds of people get together to make a difference in the Whitewater community. Many of our members wore shirts denoting our group and letting the community know that we existed not as a group that might spend its time talking about how atheists and other non-theists could have the same desire to do good as our more religious counterparts, but that we were willing to act on our words and to make a difference.

Near the end of the year, we were presented with an opportunity to join a newly formed Madison area branch of the Coalition of Reason. This was something that our group was glad to do because we were able to see the potential that the Coalition of Reason has to make great change in our world and we hoped that joining the group could allow others to see what our group could do, as well as allowing us to better connect with other groups with similar interests to ours. We hope to be able to do our small part to shed light on reason and rationality in a world that is too often polluted by the darkness of faith and irrationality. There are some very serious issues in the world and we recognize that they should be handled with rationality and careful reasoning.

*By Nellie Meany & Chris Long*

## Upcoming Events

### June 25

SWiFT - Southeast Wisconsin Freethinkers  
Summer Solstice Party  
1:00 pm at Little Muskego Lake  
Fun! Food! Boat rides!  
More info - [www.swiftnow.org](http://www.swiftnow.org)

Procession of the Species  
4:00 pm Olbrich Park - Madison  
Parade, picnic, and bonfire!  
More info - [www.madprocession.org](http://www.madprocession.org)

### July 10

Humanist Union of Madison  
Potluck and Discussion  
11:45 at the Prairie Meeting House  
More info - [www.humanist.madisonwi.us](http://www.humanist.madisonwi.us)

### July 31

Science Pub - Animal Emotions  
2:00pm at Brocach Irish Pub  
Madison Capitol Square  
More info - [madsciencepub.org](http://madsciencepub.org)

### August 24-28

1st National Democracy Convention  
Madison  
More info - [www.democracyconvention.org](http://www.democracyconvention.org)

## Secular Holidays 2011

### June - December

[www.secularseasons.org](http://www.secularseasons.org) for more information

#### June

- (5) World Environment Day
- (21) World Humanist Day
- (21) Summer Solstice

#### July

- (4) Indivisible Day

#### August

- (11) Ingersoll Day

#### September

- (23) Autumn Equinox
- (24) Banned Book Week (Sep 24-Oct 1)

#### October

- (2) National Secular Service Day  
(1st Sunday Oct)
- Freethought Month
- (12) Freethought Day

#### November

- (24) Church/State Separation Week (Nov 24-28)

#### December

- (10) International Human Rights Day
- (22) Winter Solstice
- (23) HumanLight ([humanlight.madisonwi.us](http://humanlight.madisonwi.us))



#### Atheists and Agnostics of Wisconsin

Email: [AAW@atheistalliance.org](mailto:AAW@atheistalliance.org)

Phone: (608) 233-5640 x4

#### Atheists, Humanists and Agnostics (AHA!) at the UW-Madison

Website: <http://wiscatheists.blogspot.com/>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2201752582>

Email: [wiscatheists@gmail.com](mailto:wiscatheists@gmail.com)

#### Humanist Union of Madison

Website: <http://humanist.madisonwi.us/>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/humanistunion>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/humanistunion>

Email: [humanistunion@gmail.com](mailto:humanistunion@gmail.com)

Media: [Humanism Today](#) radio program:

<http://madisonwi.us/WIDE-LP/Citywide/wh/index.htm#mon>

#### Madison Skeptics

Website: <http://skeptics.madisonwi.us/>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=41382707013>

Meetup: <http://www.meetup.com/madisonskeptics/>

Email: [madisonskeptics@gmail.com](mailto:madisonskeptics@gmail.com)

#### Secular Student Alliance @ UW-Whitewater

Website: <http://www.secularstudents.org/uww>

Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=120466027970085>

Email: [UWW\(AT\)secularstudents\(DOT\)org](mailto:UWW(AT)secularstudents(DOT)org)

#### Verusono

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