



# The Secular Circular

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

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

JUNE 2017

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## Summer Solstice Party:

### Games, Prizes, Stimulating Conversation and Food!

Join us for the annual Summer Solstice Party!

**When:** Saturday, June 17<sup>th</sup> at 12:30 p.m.

**Where:** Stow Grove Park, Area 3,  
580 N. La Patera Lane, Goleta

**What to Bring:** Finger-food desserts (cookies, brownies, tiny cupcakes); lawn chairs (if desired) and sun hats

**Cost:** \$15 per person (HSSB members or guests). You can pay at the event.

**Catering** will be provided by Big Joe's Tacos:  
Tacos and all the fixings, salad and fruit kabobs  
Water, beer, wine and sodas will be provided by HSSB  
Appetizers will be provided by HSSB

Please email **Anne Rojas** with your name and number of people attending no later than  
**Saturday, June 10<sup>th</sup>.**

[annehrojas@gmail.com](mailto:annehrojas@gmail.com)

If you cannot email Anne, call and leave a message: 805-564-6086



## Activities

**The Annual Summer Solstice Picnic will be June 17<sup>th</sup>** at Stow Grove Park, Goleta. See details on Page 1 of this newsletter. Be sure to RSVP to Anne Rojas by Saturday, June 10.

## Welcome New Members!

Doris Frey, Santa Barbara

## May Speaker: Jacie Rowe: Final Exit Network Robert Bernstein

Jacie Rowe of the Final Exit Network informed the Humanist Society about end of life options that were new to many of us.

Back in October 2014, Toni Broaddus of Compassion and Choices talked about the coming End of Life Option Act for California. People were urged to call and write letters to help the law get passed and it paid off. That law was signed by Governor Brown a year later in October 2015 and went into effect June 9, 2016. The Act allows a terminally ill patient to get a prescription from a doctor for an aid-in-dying drug. The patient has to be expected to die within six months to get the prescription.

But Jacie Rowe explained that the law has some serious limitations. It can be difficult to find a doctor willing to write the prescription. And it can be difficult to find a pharmacy willing to fill the prescription.

In Santa Barbara, we are fortunate that the Sansum Medical Clinic is a participant. But in Los Angeles and in the San Fernando Valley, it can be harder. UCLA on paper is supportive, but many doctors there are not.

During lobbying for the End of Life Option Act, it was expected to take five years to pass. But Governor Brown said he wanted it. He said he would want it for himself if needed. Even one Republican legislator signed on.

A 2014 poll showed 57-61% support for the bill. By 2015, support had risen to 71%.



*Speaker Jacie Rowe (center) with HSSB member Marian Shapiro (L) and President Roger Schlueter (R). Photo by Robert Bernstein.*

The California Medical Association (CMA) had fought against it in the past. Supporters wanted them on board. There is one doctor in the California Senate. Supporters of the bill wanted to make him at least neutral. They got that. They asked him to go to the California Medical Association. Some doctors pushed back, saying "we do no harm." One said he had been a doctor 30 years. Another said he had been, too. Anyone who practiced medicine that long had to have seen terrible, unnecessary suffering. Supporters got the CMA to agree at least to be neutral. It turns out less than 20% of doctors are in the CMA. It is really a 501-C4 lobbying group.

Rowe told the story of a woman whose father was an architect. The father had a terrible brain cancer. It felt like termites were eating his brain; like a hammer banging him on the head. He had the idea that using a gun to end his life would make a terrible mess for others to clean up. He used his architecture skills to design a box that would contain the mess. He worked on

it for two years and had to give up. His painful death took five years.

We had the law, but for many it did not help. Rowe compared the Final Exit Network to the Underground Railroad. It is a legal organization that works with the autonomy of the person. Suppose a person, "Richard," has a terrible terminal illness. Richard can call Final Exit Network (FEN) and they will call back within 24 hours. They will talk to Richard and submit a medical report for evaluation. FEN doctors would talk to Richard. In a short time, Richard will have a decision whether he qualifies. If he does, FEN would provide information which would allow Richard to end his life.

Rowe quoted Unitarian Universalist (UU) theologian Forrest Church: "Death is not a curse to be outwitted no matter the cost. Death is the natural pivot on which life turns, without which life as we know it could not be. A pro-life-support position is not always a pro-life position. When we can no longer hold on with purpose, to let go is to die with dignity and grace."

In 2015, 71% of the public supported the End of Life Option Act. Only 51-54% of doctors did. But 74% of doctors said they would end their own life in that situation!

Life Insurance can be a concern if the death is viewed as a suicide. But the End of Life Option Act recognizes the cause of death as the illness, not as the medication that ended the life. The illness is what goes on the death certificate.

How many here have prepared to die? About half raised their hands. Rowe recommends that everyone fill in the Physician's Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) form. It can be downloaded online. But he recommends getting it from your doctor. It is fluorescent pink. You can specify a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order, and/or no new or experimental medicine.

We need to take responsibility for ourselves--today. You can post a DNR on your door or on your refrigerator. Some wear DNR bracelets. Fill in the *Five Wishes* for end of life. Give it to your doctor and to others who know you so that your wishes will be fulfilled. We prepare for other things. This is one more thing.

Alzheimer's is the elephant in the room. It won't kill in six months or less. But FEN can work with Alzheimer's patients during a critical window: The patient has to be mentally competent at the time of the agreement.

Rowe is a member of FEN himself. He had a surprisingly young initiation. He was just 8 years old and his mother was just 23! She realized that one could get in a car wreck and be in a terrible state afterwards where recovery would never happen. She told young Jacie that she would not want to be kept alive in that case. He realized he felt the same way.

A 17-year old friend later crashed his Mustang car and his brains actually came out of his head. But he was still breathing in the hospital. Jacie remembered how the hospital pillow was stained by the brains still leaking out. He was relieved that the parents pulled the plug.

"What if the light at the end of the tunnel is just coming out of another vagina?" For some, they see death as just the start of a new life.

What is the drug that is used? Barbiturates. The dose involves taking 30 pills. It is supposed to take about two hours to die. In fact, it can take 15 minutes to nine hours. The drug originally cost just \$30. But after the law passed, the price was upped to \$3,500-\$4,800.

There are other options. Refusal of water can take two weeks or more. Another option uses an inert gas. The latter can happen very fast and is always effective within 30 minutes. In many cases the family and friends are gathered and they actually want more time.

Rowe thanked us for coming to learn, not how to die --but how to end suffering. He notes that in every state but Georgia, it is legal to educate a person how to end your life. FEN has lawyers and have had to fight at times.

FEN will also have conversations with family members. Many family members will be religious or otherwise oppose ending your life. But FEN volunteers are often successful at reaching them and having them understand.

He urged people to continue to support Compassionate Choices to get similar laws passed in more states. Their work and FEN's are both necessary and complement each other.

HSSB member Judy Fontana strongly recommends reading *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End* by Atul Gawande. Rowe agreed.

It is reassuring to know that there are good people like Jacie Rowe with FEN who are there to help with challenging end of life situations. You can join FEN:

<http://www.finalexitnetwork.org/Home.html>

*Note for interested readers:*

*POLST Information:* <http://polst.org/>

*Five Wishes:*

<https://www.agingwithdignity.org/five-wishes/individuals-and-families>

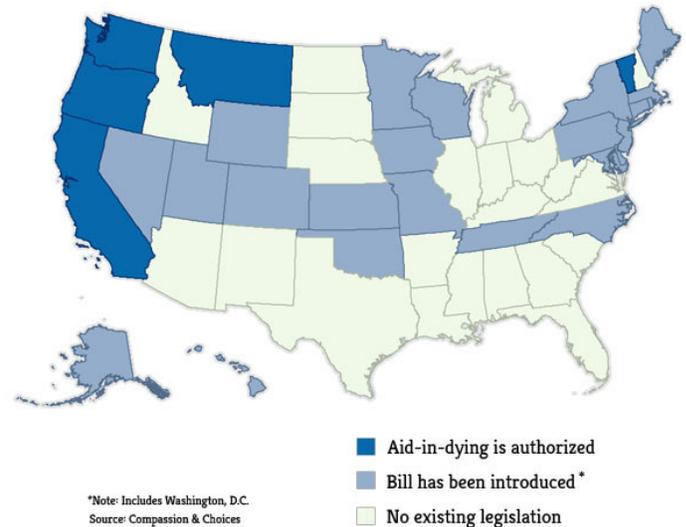
*Being Mortal* by Atul Gawande:

<http://atulgawande.com/book/being-mortal/>

*You can listen to Jacie's talk here:*

<http://www.santabarbarahumanists.org/article/10672-audio-of-jacie-rowe-from-the-final-exit-network>

Is Aid-In-Dying Allowed In Your State?



“For all the comforting philosophies we can offer, the most powerful thing we can give each other in the face of death is companionship and witness. When I’m struggling with the fear of my own death, or with grief over the death of someone I love, what comforts me most isn’t philosophies or ideas. It’s the presence of someone who loves me just sitting with me silently, letting me feel what I have to feel, not trying to fix it or make it go away but simply being with me while I feel it. It’s the presence of someone who loves me letting me know that I’m not alone — and by their presence, being part of the foundation I can come back to when the feelings pass.”

---Greta Christina

[Comforting Thoughts About Death That Have Nothing to Do with God](#)

“I do not fear death. I had been dead for billions and billions of years before I was born, and had not suffered the slightest inconvenience from it.”

---Mark Twain

## Humanists & The Homeless: Join Our Project Team!

Judy Flattery

Did you hear Officer Keld Hove talking about Restorative Policing for the homeless of Santa Barbara (March 2017 meeting)? Are you interested in exploring how we, as Humanists, could impact this important effort to sustainably transform the well-being of the homeless in our city and educate ourselves in the process? Join our newly forming Humanist Restorative Policing Project team!

As a reminder, the goal of Restorative Policing is to work with homeless individuals who are ready to make a change and connect them with the people and services that can support them in transforming their lives and circumstances. Restorative policing is not about their next meal or a bed for a night—it is about permanently transitioning the homeless person off the streets *when they are ready and committed to making a change* (See Robert Bernstein’s article in the April 2017 Secular Circular or at *Edhat.com* <http://www.edhat.com/site/tidbit.cfm?nid=183567>).

What does this have to do with our Humanist Society?

1. Our president, Roger Schlueter, affirmed at the May Board meeting that “Social justice follows conceptually with [the philosophy of] Humanism.” The Board discussed how our organization has looked for ways to participate in social justice causes and how to become more involved with the community. This effort could increase our impact and expand our visibility in the community.
2. The Humanist Society of Western New York states, “Humanists believe that this is the only life of which we have certain knowledge, and that we owe it to

ourselves and others to make it the best life possible for ourselves and all with whom we share this fragile planet.”

I personally spoke with “Joe,” a homeless man living near the In-N-Out on Calle Real. He told me his suffering in this life will be rewarded in the afterlife... so why make a change? He’s just waiting for the afterlife. More suffering, more reward. Our Humanist perspective might possibly encourage someone to take action now.

As far as we know... as far as the evidence shows... “THIS IS IT!”

What do we expect the Humanist Restorative Policing Project team to *actually do*? Here are some of my initial thoughts. I welcome you to share your thoughts to influence the purpose and direction of the team:

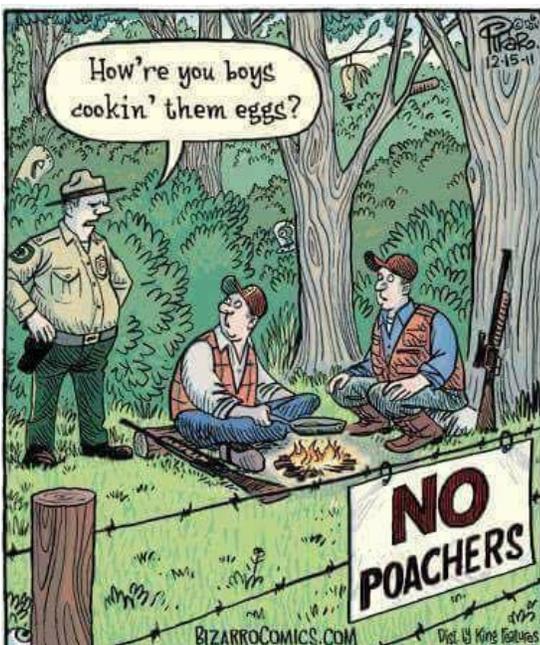
- We will educate ourselves about homelessness in Santa Barbara and about the resources already in place;
- We will work cooperatively with other local groups and agencies in furthering the restorative policing mission;
- We will identify gaps not already met and create innovative projects where our perspective, talents, efforts & leadership would make a real difference;
- We will initially target the ‘clients’ identified by Officer Hove, the older, less mobile, mentally challenged homeless above Carrillo for whom fewer services are available.
- We will be willing to share our Humanist point of view when appropriate with the intention of making a positive difference. For example, my point of view is that this life is the only life I have... and how it goes has nothing to do with the supernatural... so it’s *up to me* to create the life I want and to ask for support from other *people* when I am stuck.

I also asked Officer Hove for an example of what he thought was missing that could make a difference in supporting his clients.

He said it could be very helpful to sponsor a discussion group for his homeless clients, possibly moderated by an experienced discussion group leader or therapist, where the homeless clients could share about their lives and their challenges, dreams, and goals. Our team could help create this event, we could participate as committed active listeners, we could follow up with concrete actions supporting people motivated to make a change.

What might those concrete actions be? It could mean a small team of us assist a particular homeless person in overcoming their specific life challenge. Maybe that means making a few phone calls or doing an internet search to locate a family member or assisting them in preparing for an interview. The projects would be tailored to the life of that individual providing dignity and support as they lead themselves out of homelessness.

If you are interested in working with us to further develop this team and its actions *please contact Judy Flattery at 805 729 5026 ([flattejl@cox.net](mailto:flattejl@cox.net))*. Kick-off is scheduled for early fall.



## Come Act With Us! Ray Stone

Last call for tryouts for our September 16<sup>th</sup> “Meeting of Minds” production. This play by Steve Allen includes biting conversation among Aristotle, Niccolo Machiavelli, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and Sun Yat-Sen. To audition for this show, please contact either Meredith McMinn ([meredith48@me.com](mailto:meredith48@me.com), or 805-907-5880) or Ray Stone ([rstone@west.net](mailto:rstone@west.net), or 805-682-2123). Come join the fun!

## Secular Values Summit Awards

On June 14<sup>th</sup>, in Washington, DC, the Secular Coalition for America will host its second annual Secular Awards Dinner in partnership with the Newseum's Religious Freedom Center. At this event, they will honor members of Congress and activists who have stood up for the separation of church and state, science-based policy, and nontheistic Americans.

The recipients of this year's awards are:

- Senator Chris Coons (Delaware);
- Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (Rhode Island);
- Congressman Jerry Nadler (New York);
- Congressman Bobby Scott (Virginia);
- State Representative Athena Salman (Arizona);
- Kimberly Winston (reporter, Religion News Service); and
- Dr. Herb Silverman (Founder and President, Secular Coalition for America).

Read about Rep. Salman's godless invocation here:

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/friendlyatheist/2017/04/19/an-az-state-rep-gave-a-godless-invocation-so-her-colleague-said-a-christian-prayer-to-correct-her/>

## Member News

Congratulations and best wishes to **Robert Bernstein** and **Merlie Samonte** who were married on May 13. This was a humanist wedding, officiated by HSSB member and Humanist Celebrant **Jonathan Young**. In addition, HSSB members **Judy Fontana** and **Robin Hamlin** provided significant help with the coordination of the music, food, and decorations.

More photos and a video of the Humanist ceremony at this link:

<http://swt.org/events/wedding/>



(Above, L to R): Robert, Jonathan, and Merlie. Photo by Robert Bernstein.

(Below): Merlie and Robert enjoying dancing at their wedding. Photo courtesy of Robert Bernstein.



## How Many American Atheists are There Really? Brian Resnick

*(Excerpted from Vox.com, 4/13/2017)*

Here's a simple question: How many Americans don't believe in God?

Pew and Gallup — two of the most reputable polling firms in America — both come to a similar figure. About 10 percent of Americans say they do not believe in God, and this figure has been slowly creeping up over the decades.

But maybe this isn't the whole story. University of Kentucky psychologists Will Gervais and Maxine Najle have long suspected that a lot of atheists aren't showing up in these polls. The reason: Even in our increasingly secular society, there's still a lot of stigma around not believing in God. So when a stranger conducting a poll calls and asks the question, it may be uncomfortable for many to answer truthfully.

Gervais and Najle recently conducted a new analysis on the prevalence of atheists in America. And they conclude the number of people who do not believe in God may be even double that counted by these polling firms.

"There's a lot of atheists in the closet," Gervais says. "And ... if they knew there are lots of people just like them out there, that could potentially promote more tolerance."

Currently, if you're seeking data to answer the question, "How many Americans do not believe in God?" you have two main sources.

First is the Pew Research Center. Most recently, Pew found that around 3 percent of Americans say they are atheists. It also found that a larger group — around 9 percent — say they do not believe in God or a universal spirit. (Which goes

to show that you may not believe in God but could still be uncomfortable calling yourself an atheist — because that term implies a strong personal identity and an outright rejection of religious rituals.) Gallup also regularly asks the question point blank — “Do you believe in God?” The last time it asked, in 2016, 10 percent of respondents said no.

Gervais’s experience studying the stigma around atheism the world over made him suspect these numbers are wrong.

Study after study has shown that most people (even other atheists) believe atheists are less moral. “We’ll give participants a little vignette, a story about someone doing something immoral, and probe their intuition about who they think the perpetrator was,” Gervais says. “And time and time again, people intuitively assume whoever is out there doing immoral stuff doesn’t believe in God.”

So it would make sense that when Pew or Gallup calls, people who don’t believe in God may be reluctant to say so. “We shouldn’t expect people to give a stranger over the phone an honest answer to that question,” Gervais says.

So recently, Gervais and Najle designed a test to find these “closet atheists.” Their [results](#) were recently published in the journal *Social Psychological and Personality Science*...

One thing is clear from the results: Much more than 10 or 11 percent of the country (as assessed in Gallup and Pew polling) does not believe in God. “We can say with a 99 percent probability that it’s higher than [11 percent],” said Gervais.

His best estimate: Around 26 percent of Americans don’t believe in God. “According to our samples, about 1 in 3 atheists in our country don’t feel comfortable disclosing their lack of belief,” Najle explains in an email...

I ran Gervais and Najle’s conclusion by Greg Smith, who directs Pew’s polling efforts on religion. He’s not yet ready to buy it.

“I would be very reluctant to conclude that phone surveys like ours are underestimating the share the public who are atheists to that kind of magnitude,” he says.

For one, Smith says, Pew has asked questions on religion both on the phone and online and didn’t see much of a difference. You’d expect if people were unwilling to say that they’re atheists over the phone to a stranger, they’d be slightly more likely to input it into a computer...

There’s something else to consider here: Our experience with religion can’t really be boiled down to one question — “Do you believe in God?”

Many of us have a complicated relationship with religion. There are plenty of people celebrating Easter and Passover this week not because they have devout faith, but because it’s a cultural tradition they cherish and identify with...

The lesson: Belief in God doesn’t exist as a binary. Not everyone is certain about what they feel; many people have shades of gray. “

And Gervais admits: This measure doesn’t capture the complex and contradictory feelings many people have about religion.

But in the data, they also find some small evidence that the stigma around atheism is changing...

*Read the entire article here:*

<https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2017/4/13/15258496/american-atheists-how-many>

## Non-HSSB Events of Interest

### Upcoming Events in California:

- June 11: Dr. Walter Scheidel: *The Great Leveler: Violence and the History of Inequality from the Stone Age to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Skeptics Society Salon, Pasadena.  
<http://www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures/violence-and-the-history-of-inequality/>
- June 18: Indre Viskontas: *Brain Myths: Lessons from Neuroscience*. Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles.  
[http://www.centerforinquiry.net/la/events/brain\\_myths\\_lessons\\_from\\_neuroscience/](http://www.centerforinquiry.net/la/events/brain_myths_lessons_from_neuroscience/)

### Upcoming Events Outside of California:

- June 8-11: American Humanists Association 76<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference. Speakers include Rob Boston, Greta Christina, Carl Coon, Rachael Berman, and many others. Charleston, South Carolina.  
<http://conference.americanhumanist.org/>
- August 19-21: American Atheists National Convention. Speakers include Chris Kluwe, Richard Dawkins, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, David Silverman, Seth Andrews, Matt Dillahunty, and many more. In addition, there will be an Eclipse Viewing party on Monday, August 21! Charleston, South Carolina.  
<https://www.atheists.org/convention2017/>



### HSSB Contact Information

#### Officers:

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David Echols      Pat Ward

Colin Gordon      Mary Wilk

#### Newsletter Editor:

Diane Krohn

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#### Newsletter Deadline:

Deadline for submissions to the Secular Circular is midnight, the last day of each month.

**HSSB meetings** are held on the 3rd Saturday of each month at 2:30 pm, usually in the Patio Room of Vista del Monte, 3775 Modoc Rd., Santa Barbara. More information is available at our web site: [www.SantaBarbaraHumanists.org](http://www.SantaBarbaraHumanists.org). At meetings, a donation of \$2 from members and \$5 from non-members is appreciated. First-time visitors are welcome on a complimentary basis. Students are free with a Student ID.

**Annual HSSB membership dues** are \$36 for a single person, \$60 for a couple, and \$100 (or more) to become a Society Supporter. One may subscribe to our newsletter only for an annual fee of \$20.

To join HSSB, please send your contact information and a check for your membership dues to HSSB, PO Box 30232, Santa Barbara, CA 93130, Attn: Mary Wilk. For membership information contact Mary Wilk at [mwilk@cox.net](mailto:mwilk@cox.net).

For any information about HSSB, call 805-769-4772.

Copies of this newsletter are posted on the HSSB website.

See us on Facebook





Humanist Society of  
Santa Barbara  
PO Box 30232  
Santa Barbara, CA 93130

### **HSSB Calendar**

**Tuesday June 13: Board Meeting:** 5:30 p.m. Home of **Mary Wilk**. Members invited to attend.

**Saturday June 17: Annual Summer Solstice Picnic.** Meet at 12:30 in Stow Grove Park for games, good conversation, and a catered lunch by Big Joe's Tacos. See Page 1 of this newsletter for details.

**Tuesday July 11 : Board Meeting:** 5:30 p.m. Home of **Mary Wilk**. Members invited to attend.

**Saturday July 15: Monthly Meeting:** Kimberly West-Faulcon, Professor of Law at Loyola Law School, will speak on recent Supreme Court decisions; the Patio Room at Vista del Monte. Meet at 2:30 p.m. for socializing and light refreshments. Talk starts at 3:00 p.m. Optional buffet dinner after the talk at Vista del Monte.