



The Secular Circular

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

www.SBHumanists.org

DECEMBER 2018



December Program: Winter Solstice Party



Come join your friends at HSSB for our Annual
Winter Solstice Party!

Fun, Friends, Music and Camaraderie

Date: Saturday, December 15th, 2018

Time: Doors open at 4:00 PM

Buffet dinner at 5:00 PM

Place: Cody's Café

4898 Hollister Avenue, Santa Barbara

(in the Turnpike Shopping Center, Hollister Avenue and Turnpike)



Cost: \$25 per person – includes dinner, dessert and drinks.

Coffee, tea, soft drinks and wine is included in the price.

Buffet Menu with salad, side dishes, and 4 entrée options: Salmon, Sirloin, Chicken or Vegetarian*

*Vegetarian by request. You must request vegetarian at the time that you reserve.



RSVP an absolute must, by Wednesday, December 12th.

Contact Nan Cisney cisneynan@gmail.com to reserve.

Make checks out to "SB Humanist Society"

Send checks to: Nan Cisney, 649 Verde Mar #E, Santa Barbara, CA
93103

Checks will also be accepted at the door.

Cody's has a 40-person maximum so please reserve today. We will fill up fast!

December Activities: Annual Solstice Party

Our December activity is the Winter Solstice Party on Saturday, December 15th. See Page 1 of this newsletter for details or contact any Board members for more information. We will have music, lots of good food and good conversation.

RSVP by Wednesday, December 12th is absolutely necessary. RSVP to Nan Cisney cisneyan@gmail.com

President's Column: Humanism and Patriotism Roger Schlueter

The October/November issue of *Free Inquiry* contains a cover story entitled "The Humanist Case Against Patriotism" by David Mountain. If you are a subscriber to *Free Inquiry* you can find the article [here](#). In a closely related opinion piece, David Brooks wrote an editorial for the October 25th edition of the *New York Times* entitled "Yes, I'm an American Nationalist" that can be read [here](#). While I will focus on the former piece, I think both authors miss an important distinction that significantly damages the argument they make.

Both authors fail to make a distinction between nationalism and patriotism which, as I've noted, makes their arguments unpersuasive. Brooks, in particular, simply ignores the difference while proudly proclaiming his nationalism. What he asserts is that he is a patriot; too bad he didn't say so. Mountain, on the other hand, seems to be completely oblivious to the difference and in doing so makes a fallacious argument about Humanism. In the remainder of this piece, I'll focus on Mountain's argument because he specifically speaks to Humanism as it relates to patriotism.

Obviously central to my objections to these two authors revolves around what differentiate nationalism from patriotism. While the two words are often used interchangeably, they carry important connotations that cannot be ignored. In my view Patriotism is affection for one's country and pride in what its values are. Conversely, nationalism, is an extreme, blind attitude that regards one's own country as better than all others and that demands strict allegiance to one's country over one's values.

Our current President proudly states that he is a nationalist and, for once, he's right. His latest slogan is "America First!" (even including the exclamation mark!), which means he sees the USA not as a member of the community of nations, but rather as above the community of nations. He believes that we must "win" over others in international negotiations. He's not a patriot.

Mountain concludes his essay by stating that "we are compelled, as Humanists, to reject patriotism," but he too fails to recognize that he has misused that label. Every example he cites for the justification of his conclusion is not an example of patriotism so I reject his thesis. Humanists can be patriots.

Let me conclude with a bumper sticker about one's country:

Nationalism: Love it or leave it.

Patriotism: Love it or fix it.

True patriotism is better than the wrong kind of piety.

---Abraham Lincoln

Patriotism is supporting your country all the time, and your government when it deserves it.

---Mark Twain

Patriotism is not a short and frenzied outburst of emotion but the tranquil and steady dedication of a lifetime.

---Adlai Stevenson II

A Humanist Recap of the Midterm Election

Nicole Carr

(Excerpted from the humanist.com, November 8, 2018)

In very good midterm election news, all ten members of the Congressional Freethought Caucus won their re-elections by considerable margins on Tuesday. That means Representatives Jared Huffman (D-CA) and Jamie Raskin (D-MD), caucus co-chairs; Dan Kildee (D-MI) and Jerry McNerney (D-CA), the other founding members; and Steve Cohen (D-TN), Pramila Jayapal (D-WA), Hank Johnson (D-GA), Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), and Mark Pocan (D-WI) will all be returning to the US House of Representatives. As a reminder, the Freethought Caucus promotes public policy based on reason, science, and moral values. The American Humanist Association (AHA) was honored to participate in the organizational meetings that resulted in its foundation.

The good news wasn't limited to the House of Representatives. In the Senate, Jacky Rosen (D-NV), who identifies herself as an ally of the secular community, beat incumbent Dean Heller...

Newly elected Senator Rosen, a computer programmer, is one of nine incoming legislators who are credentialed in fields of science and medicine. Seven Democratic scientists will become members of the House, including an industrial engineer, an ocean scientist, a dentist, a biochemical engineer, a nurse, a nuclear engineer, and a pediatrician. One new Republican is a former aerospace engineer who ran as a businessman.

In other election news of interest around the country:

A record number of women—ninety-five so far, with some races still being counted—won seats in the US House of Representatives. The increasingly inclusive group includes:

- the first Muslim congresswomen (Democrats Rashida Tlaib of Michigan and Ilhan Omar of Minnesota);
- the first Native American congresswomen (Democrats Deb Haaland of New Mexico and Sharice Davids of Kansas);
- the youngest woman ever elected to Congress (Democrat Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York);
- the first black congresswoman from Massachusetts (Democrat Ayanna Pressley); and
- the first two Latina congresswomen from Texas (Democrats Veronica Escobar and Sylvia Garcia).
- Republican Marsha Blackburn, the first female senator from Tennessee. (Republicans will have fourteen fewer female members in the new Congress than currently hold office, however.)

In state capitols, Jared Polis (Democrat of Colorado) will become the country's first openly gay governor. Kristi Noem (Republican of North Dakota) and Janet Mills (Democrat of Maine) will become the first women governors in their states, while Michelle Lujan Grisham (Democrat of New Mexico) will be the first Democratic Latina to win a gubernatorial race.

- Democrat Ned Lamont, the grandnephew of the renowned humanist Corliss Lamont (cofounder and longtime director of the ACLU, AHA president, and 1977 Humanist of the Year), was elected governor of Connecticut.
- Kim Davis, who gained fame when she refused to provide marriage licenses to same-sex couples because of her discriminatory religious beliefs, lost her re-election bid for county clerk in Kentucky.

Voters supported ballot measures aimed at making voting easier in states including:

- Florida, where 1.4 million people who have been convicted of a felony will soon be able to vote;
- Michigan, Colorado, and Missouri, which all passed anti-gerrymandering initiatives;
- Nevada, where voters approved automatic voter registration at the Department of Motor Vehicles; and
- Maryland, where people will soon be able to register on Election Day....

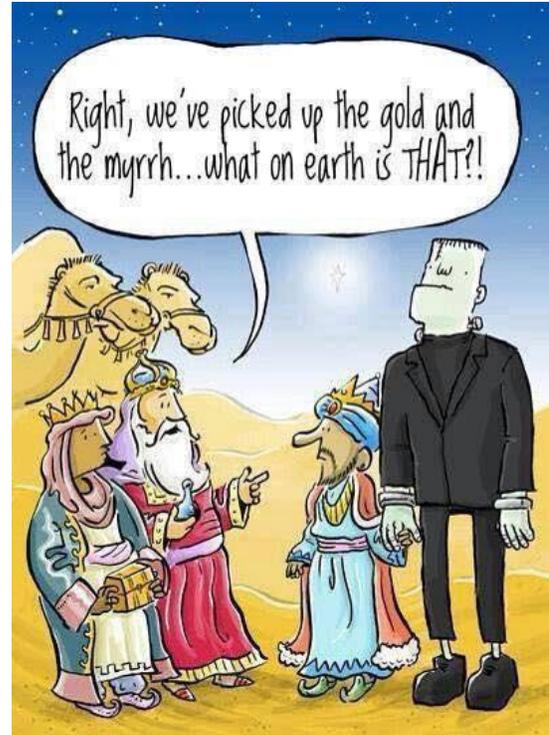
Tuesday night, as big names like Beto O'Rourke and Joe Donnelly fell, it was hard to see a blue wave. Today, however, has demonstrated how far progressive values truly carried the day. The forty-seven members or allies of the freethought community who are now elected officials at the state and federal level will continue the work of the American Humanist Association, the Center for Freethought Equality, and the Congressional Freethought Caucus in promoting policy based in reason, science, and compassion. This morning, after a week of rain here in DC, the sun is shining in slightly bluer skies.

Read the entire article here:
<https://thehumanist.com/commentary/a-humanist-recap-of-the-midterm-election>

A Short Note from the President Roger Schlueter

Some of our members have asked if they could take the partially emptied wine bottles left at the end of our dinners after the monthly meetings home with them. The answer is "No." and there are a number reasons behind that answer. One is that it is illegal to have open alcoholic containers in vehicles on California roads. Another relates to potential liability to Valle Verde. There are other factors but they all

add up to the conclusion that you should enjoy your Valle Verde wine while at Valle Verde and your own wine while at home.



Local Hero Al Sladek

HSSB member Al Sladek received recognition by the *Santa Barbara Independent* as a "Local Hero" for 2018. For the past 32 years, the *Independent* asks for nominations of community members who have contributed to the local area in both big and small ways. This year, the Thomas Fire first responders and the 1/9 Debris Flow responders were honored, along with advocates for the homeless, dancers, lawn bowlers...and hikers! Al garnered his award as a Trail Leader, leading Sierra Club Friday night hikes for an amazing 44 years!

You can read about Al and the other local heroes here:

<https://www.independent.com/news/2018/nov/21/local-heroes-2018/>

Values Void: How the Religious Right Learned to Love Sex Offenders

Rob Boston

The Humanist.com, 23 October 2018

After the infamous *Access Hollywood* audiotape emerged in October 2016 on which Donald Trump boasts about how easy it is to sexually assault women when you're rich and famous, the leaders and followers of America's religious right groups just yawned.

When women in Alabama came forth a year later with stories of how they'd been assaulted or hit on by Senate candidate Roy Moore when they were teenagers in the 1980s, the religious right shrugged.

Following recent allegations that Brett Kavanaugh, Trump's nominee to the Supreme Court, had sexually assaulted a fifteen-year-old girl when he was seventeen, the religious right either blamed the victim, Christine Blasey Ford, or wrote it off as "boys will be boys."

Evangelist Franklin Graham's response was typical—and appalling. The charges against Kavanaugh, he asserted, were "not relevant."

Graham went on to say,

We've got to look at a person's life and what they've done as an adult and are they qualified for this position so this is just an attempt to smear him. ... Well, there wasn't a crime committed. These are two teenagers and it's obvious that she said no and he respected it and walked away.

Graham talks as if he'd been in the room at the time, but in fact, he appears to be unaware of even basic information about Ford's account. She reported that Kavanaugh and his friend Mike Judge, both of whom she says were

intoxicated, pushed her into a bedroom, where Kavanaugh pinned her to a bed and pawed at her clothes, at one point covering her mouth with his hand when she tried to scream for help. Judge jumped on the two and knocked everyone off the bed, at which point Ford was able to escape. Ford said she feared for her life.

Does that sound like "she said no and he respected it and walked away" to you?

But don't get the wrong idea. The religious right's tendency to act as apologists for men who misbehave sexually only goes so far: it's strictly Republicans who automatically get the benefit of a pass.

Consider what happened after information about President Bill Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky came to light. The religious right demanded his impeachment. Yet when word broke about an extramarital affair Rep. Henry Hyde (R-IL) had undertaken in the 1960s, it was written off as a "youthful indiscretion," even though Hyde was over forty when it happened.

The religious right also turned a blind eye to the antics of serial adulterer Newt Gingrich and never said a peep about Sen. David Vitter's (R-LA) predilection for prostitutes.

Most Americans would agree that allegations of sexual assault or harassment by high officials (or by anyone, really) should be investigated, no matter the political affiliation of the accused. The religious right doesn't see it that way. They've embraced a double standard typified by an acronym that's popular on social media: IOKWRDI—"It's OK when Republicans do it."

This is a curious stance for a collection of people so allegedly concerned with morality that over the years they have adopted names like the Moral Majority, the Christian Coalition, and the Faith & Freedom Coalition.

Every fall, the Family Research Council sponsors the Values Voter Summit. The clear implication is that the people who gather for it are hewing to some sort of superior moral standard. They have values; the rest of us (by implication) do not—or the values we hold are defective.

In light of recent events, it's fair to ask: What exactly are the "values" held by the religious right? For a long time, sexual purity supposedly ranked high among them for this gang. During the long struggle for LGBTQ rights, the nation was told ad nauseam that marriage was between one man and one woman for life. Many people involved in the religious right have the one-man/one-woman thing down, but they seem to be having a little difficulty with the "for life" part. Evangelical divorce rates tend to track with the rest of the population or sometimes even jump a little higher.

More to the point, they continually make excuses for conservative politicians who violate this standard. Donald Trump, despite his long history of treating women like sex objects for his entertainment, despite Stormy Daniels' claims of an extramarital dalliance, and despite his generally crude behavior, is treated like a new messiah by the religious right. When Trump was caught on tape boasting about grabbing women's vaginas, religious right leaders dismissed it as "locker room banter"—as if that somehow excused it. (Here's an interesting theoretical question: Since these "pro-family" groups admire Trump so much, they should have no trouble telling their children to emulate his behavior, right?)

We've known for a long time that the leaders and followers of the religious right are hypocrites. We've known that they're willing to embrace a double-standard if doing so helps them achieve certain political goals. And now we know that their operational philosophy in the Trump era is not the Ten Commandments,

the teachings of Jesus, or anything found in the Bible.

Rather, the religious right's lodestar (to borrow a favorite word from Vice President Mike Pence) comes from another source these days. Their guiding principle is often incorrectly attributed to Niccolò Machiavelli but is apparently much older. No matter who said it first, there's no denying that the phrase has had quite an impact over the years and has now been fully embraced by the virtue posers of the religious right.

It's this: *The ends justify the means.*

We've known for a long time that this phrase makes for cutthroat politics. Now, thanks to the religious right, we know it's a lousy platform for religion, too.

The War on Christmas is Over. Christmas Lost. Hemant Mehta

Excerpted from Friendly Atheist.patheos.com, November 29, 2018.

This won't surprise you: *Only* Republicans care about the fictional "War on Christmas."

This might surprise you: Even Republicans *don't really care* about the "War on Christmas."

How do you even measure that? A new poll from Morning Consult finds that, while 56% of Republicans say they would be *more* likely to shop at stores that explicitly say "Merry Christmas," 36% said it wouldn't change their habits at all. Meanwhile, if a store said "Happy Holidays," 48% of Republicans said it wouldn't make any difference.

But overall, more Americans than not said it wouldn't make a bit of difference if a store used the phrase "Merry Christmas" or "Happy

Holidays.” They’re going to shop wherever they feel like it...

The poll also found that, for the first time, fewer than half of all Americans planned to celebrate Christmas *in a religious way*.

While nearly all (90 percent) of the public said they celebrate Christmas, according to a 2017 Pew Research Center survey, for the first time **fewer than half (46 percent) said they celebrate it in a religious way**. That’s a drop from 51 percent who said the same thing in 2013.

If there’s “War on Christmas” meant to symbolize the link between the holiday and Christianity, then the Christmas side is finally outnumbered. (We’re coming for you next, Santa.)

At a time when Donald Trump acts like he’s doing the country a favor by saying “Merry Christmas,” it’s clear most Americans either don’t care or don’t have a positive connection with the phrase.

How’s that for irony? Republicans found a way to turn people *against* the idea of a “Merry Christmas,” dividing people over an issue that really doesn’t have to be controversial, and all because conservative Christians decided to co-opt something else as a sign of true patriotism.

See the entire article here: <https://friendlyatheist.patheos.com/2018/11/29/the-war-on-christmas-is-over-christmas-lost/>

When I was a kid, I used to pray every night for a new bicycle. Then I realized that the Lord doesn’t work that way so I stole one then asked Him to forgive me.

--Emo Phillips, American entertainer and comedian

Freedom from Religion Foundation Convention Diane Krohn

Wayne Beckman and I attended the Freedom From Religion Foundation’s (FFRF) annual convention, held in San Francisco this year. We have attended several other atheist/humanist/skeptics conferences in years past, and each conference has its own flavor of speakers and attendees. We noted that the demographics for the FFRF conference were mainly white (men and women) and older. Not much diversity that we saw in this group. Other conferences, especially CSIcon, have more racial diversity and a bigger age range.

FFRF is mainly concerned with church-state separation issues, and the organization pursues many legal challenges to religious intrusion into areas that should be secular. At the convention, many of the speakers were recipients of “awards” given by the FFRF as recognition for secular activism; for example, the “Emperor Has No Clothes” award, and the “Clarence Darrow Award.” The following are short summaries of some of the presentations.

Emperor Has No Clothes Award: U.S. Representative Jared Huffman (D-CA): Rep. Huffman represents California’s 2nd District and formed the first Freethought Caucus in Congress. Before he did this, he consulted with everyone he knew before he came out as a non-believer. Nancy Pelosi, a Catholic, and even Father Pat, the House Chaplain, were very supportive. His friends and family were very concerned, though, that it would affect his political life. The decision to come out was personal for him because he did not want to hide his beliefs. But he also does not like religious fakers and hypocrisy in government. He has not suffered any political backlash, so far!

The Freethought Caucus has about 10 members, but he is the only member who is

publicly identified as a non-believer. He said that there are at least that many other members of Congress who have privately told him that they are atheist, but they are not out as atheists.

Student Activist Award: Bailey Harris, age 12: Bailey is a 12-year old author of the book, *My Name is Stardust*. She wrote the book, with help from her father, after being inspired by the TV series *Cosmos* and Neil deGrasse Tyson. The book was written to teach children about science, evolution and astronomy. Bailey's presentation was one of the most impressive and enjoyable talks! She has a second book that was just published, *Stardust Explores the Solar System*.

(HSSB members should consider buying these books for children or grandchildren: <https://www.amazon.com/My-Name-Stardust-Douglas-Harris/dp/1941434630>)

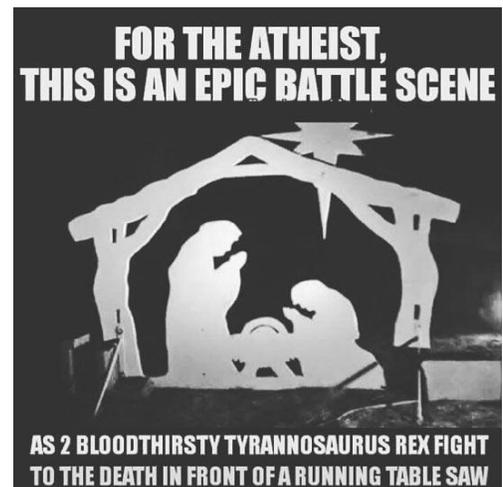
Emperor Has No Clothes Award: Salman Rushdie: What a surprise this talk was! Rushdie is not only a great speaker but is quite a humorous one also. He first talked about the difference in "godlessness" in Europe vs. America. Godlessness is so commonplace in England and Europe (the exception being Muslim communities), but it is still unusual in America. He attributed this in part to the fact that in European history, the battle for freedom was fought against the Church; "freedom" came to be understood as freedom from religion. But the early settlers to America were coming to practice their religion freely - freedom **of** religion, not freedom **from** religion. This is one of the reasons why the U.S. is so tied with religiosity.

He talked a bit about polytheistic religions vs. monotheistic religions. For polytheistic religions, the gods were never interested in ethical or moral behaviors. They behaved like humans, only worse. They were not trying to be models of the correct behavior. But

monotheistic religions took on ethics and morals, using a carrot-and-stick approach: heaven or hell.

Rushdie never thought of himself as a writer of religion (*The Satanic Verses* was written 30 years ago and actually only contains a small section referencing religion). He sees himself as a writer of the life of the city: Bombay, London, New York. After *The Satanic Verses* was published, his life became modeled by it, and he was thought not be funny. But he had written five other books before *Satanic Verses* was written; and he mentioned that people who had read *Satanic Verses* and then his other books told him that they didn't realize how funny he was! He was raised non-Islamic, but culturally Muslim, then his family moved to Bombay at the time of the India-Pakistan partition. The city was very secular at the time, with Muslims and Hindus living together and all the holidays together.

He concluded with the comments that religion says: you must submit and that gives you liberty; the non-religious approach says that you must be able to question your beliefs and that gives you liberty. Do humans have a requirement for freedom? Is it hard-wired into us? There is anecdotal evidence to support that it is hard-wired, but there is also the contrary desire for a sense of community; to be part of a larger group. It is a battle between the singular and the plural.



Non-HSSB Events of Interest

Upcoming Events in California:

- January 22, 2019: An Evening with Madeline Albright. UCSB Arts & Lectures, Granada Theater, Santa Barbara. <https://artsandlectures.ucsb.edu/Details.aspx?PerfNum=3889>

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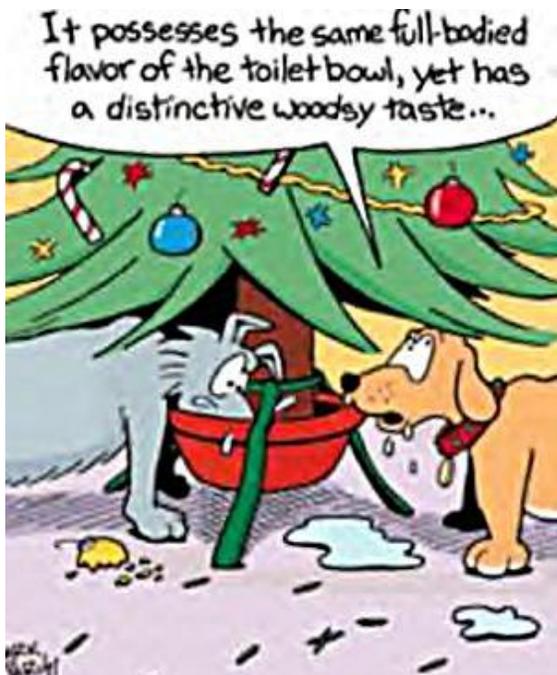
Aren't we forgetting the true meaning of Christmas? You know, the birth of Santa.

---Matt Groening, cartoonist

Did you hear about the dyslexic devil worshipper? He sold his soul to Santa.

What is an atheist's favorite Christmas movie?
"Coincidence on 34th Street."

How do you find the value of Yule taking it to the xth power?
You take the Yule log.



HSSB Contact Information

Officers:

President: Roger Schlueter, drogers@cox.net

Secretary: Diane Krohn, djkrohn@cox.net

Treasurer: Neil Faught, nfaught@verizon.net

Board Members at Large:

Wayne Beckman, David Echols, Judy Flattery,
Mary Wilk, Nan Cisney, Colin Gordon,
Clover Brodhead Gowing

Newsletter Editor:

Judy Flattery sbhumanisteditor@gmail.com

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

HSSB Speaker meetings are held on the 3rd Saturday of each month at 3:30 pm, usually in the Theater Room at Valle Verde, 900 Calle De Los Amigos, Santa Barbara. June and December social events are held elsewhere.

Speaker Meeting Parking (with free shuttle service 805.679.3660) is at **Veronica Springs Church**, 949 Veronica Springs Road, Santa Barbara. **No parking at Valle Verde unless you have a handicapped parking placard.**

Check our web site: www.SantaBarbaraHumanists.org for past issues of SC. At meetings, a donation of \$2 from members and \$5 from non-members is appreciated. First-time visitors and students with ID are welcome on a complimentary basis.

Annual HSSB membership dues are \$36 for a single person, \$60 for a couple, and \$100 for a Society Supporter and \$300 (or more) for a Society Patron. Non-members may subscribe to hardcopy of this newsletter for an annual fee of \$20. E-mail copies are provided at no charge.

To join HSSB: 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 805-967-3045 or mwilk@cox.net

For any information about HSSB, call 805-769-4772. Copies of this and past newsletters are posted on the HSSB website.

Like us on Facebook





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

HSSB Calendar

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

Saturday December 15: Winter Solstice Party! Meet at Cody's Café, 4898 Hollister Avenue, Santa Barbara, for food, fun, and friends. See details on Page 1 of this newsletter.

Tuesday January 15, 2019: Board Meeting: 5:30 p.m. Home of **Mary Wilk**. Members invited to attend.

Saturday January 19, 2019: Monthly Meeting: Speaker and topic TBA. Meet at Valle Verde Theater, 900 Calle De Los Amigos, Santa Barbara, Talk starts at 3:00 p.m. Optional buffet dinner after the talk at Valle Verde.