



WASHline

Capital Pride

WASH at PRIDE. See this page.

Beyond 250 & Public Schools

AA Event in Philadelphia and Keeping public funds in public schools. [See page 2.](#)

Editor's Corner

Announcements and commentary. [See page 3.](#)

SASH Essay Contest Winners

The 2026 SASH high school essay contest. [See page 4.](#)

Group Selection

An essay by Bill Creasy [See page 7.](#)

Chapter Reports

What do our chapters have planned? [See page 11.](#)



(L-R) Emily Newman, Mike Reid, and Ryan Hanks table at Capital Pride on behalf of WASH, American Atheists, the AHA, and WES. Picture by Mary Linnerooth.

Capital Pride

By Mike Reid

WASH tabled at the annual Capital Pride Festival in DC on June 21st. The event was held downtown along a closed off section of Pennsylvania Ave. We were joined by our national affiliates the American Humanist Association (AHA) and American Atheists, and by our friends at the Washington Ethical Society (WES). WASH DC-AHA chapter coordinator Ryan Hanks, Emily Newman of the AHA, Mary Linnerooth of WES, and *WASHline* editor Mike Reid (yours truly), staffed the table.

Thousands of people were at the festival and perhaps a couple hundred people came to our table. We told them about our organizations and

handed out literature, buttons, stickers, and posters. Most expressed their alarm at the rise of Christian nationalism in the United States and its influence on the Government.

More than sixty people signed up to join WASH. American Atheists allowed us to give out free one-year memberships to that organization and twenty-four took us up on it.

In spite of the heat, the whole atmosphere was festive and joyous. The 2026 Capital Pride festival was a great success and we were delighted to be there in support of our LGBTQ+ friends and to spread our secular word. We had a great time and hopefully provided some hope and



Samantha McGuire of American Atheists and Mike Reid of WASH in front of the U.S. Capital building.

America Beyond 250

By Mike Reid



The Liberty Bell in Philadelphia

On Saturday, May 30th, American Atheists held a half-day event they called *America Beyond 250: Reclaiming the Promise of Pluralism* in the historic Arch Street (Quaker) Meeting house in Philadelphia.

A diverse group of speakers and panelists discussed the history of secularism in America and in particular the role that Philadelphia played in our nation's early religious history. There were discussions of the future of our secular democracy and the threat that a resurgent Christian nationalism poses to it.

This small event provided a welcome opportunity for like-minded people to socialize and to learn more about the secular and pluralistic history of this country and the threats to it.

Keeping Public Funds in Public Schools

By Mike Reid

In the sultry heat of a Washington, DC summer, WASH joined our national affiliates in fighting to keep our public schools secular.

On June 11th, we teamed up with American Atheists to join a rally in support of our public schools in front of the U.S. Capital building in DC. Staff from the American Humanist Association were there as well.

There is a movement in Congress and many state legislatures to divert public funds away from our already under-resourced public schools to private schools under the pretext of "school choice." The great majority of private schools are operated by churches. This movement has more to do with sponsoring Christian religion than it does with expanding educational opportunities and it violates the separation of church and state. Allied members of Congress spoke to us about their efforts to stop this.



About WASH

The Washington Area Secular Humanists, Inc. is an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization incorporated in Maryland since 1989. It consists of multiple chapters which operate in Maryland, DC, and Virginia.

WASH is a chapter of the American Humanists Association and an affiliate of American Atheists.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in articles in *WASHline* are those of the authors and not necessarily those of WASH or its chapters.



**AMERICAN
ATHEISTS**



Editor's Corner

By Mike Reid

Things tend to slow down during our hot and humid summers here in the MD/DC/VA area, but WASH is still here and things are happening.

July 4th of this year marked the Semiquincentennial (250 year) anniversary of the founding of the United States of America. In July of 1776, representatives of the thirteen American colonies declared their independence from Great Britain and founded a new nation. This new nation would be unique in the world. Unlike nearly everywhere else, it would not be ruled by a hereditary monarch and aristocracy. It would be a representative democracy founded on the secular principles of the European Enlightenment and its government inspired by the democracy of ancient Athens and the republic of ancient Rome. Just as important, it would have no official or national religion. All persons would be free to practice their faiths however they chose and this included persons of no faith. Many of this nation's most prominent founders were not Christians in any tradition sense. They were deists whom I think can arguably considered the predecessors of modern secularists.

Sadly, there are a lot of people today who do not share the secular vision of our founders. Supported by well-funded organizations, they are rewriting our history to fit their own ends and are attempting to steer this country towards an authoritarian Christian theocracy. In their propaganda, they claim that the U.S.A. was founded as a Christian nation based on Biblical values. Anyone who studies history knows that this is pure malarkey. Nevertheless, these theocrats have had some alarming success at advancing legislation and government policies in that direction.

We saw their propaganda ostentatiously displayed in President Trump's so-called "Great American State Fair" on the National Mall this summer. What should have been an inclusive celebration of our shared national values was in reality a combination right-wing political rally and an evangelical Christian proselytization event. Grandiose as it was intended to be, this two-week long propaganda show appears to have been sparsely attended, so I guess we can take some solace in that.

SASH Essay Contest Winners

Each year, WASH's Shenandoah Area Secular Humanists (SASH) chapter holds an essay contest for high school students in the Front Royal, VA area. SASH provides the topic for the essays. This year's topic was "A Personal Decision: How I Made a Choice Between Right and Wrong." The winning students each received a \$500 cash prize. Members of the SASH chapter raise the money for the prizes and choose the winners. We thank SASH chapter coordinator Martha Heisel for organizing this. Here are the two 2026 SASH essay contest winning essays.

We congratulate recent high school graduates Adysen Silvius and Elizabeth Whetzel for winning the SASH essay contest.

A Personal Decision: How I Made a Choice Between Right and Wrong

By Adysen Silvius

My name is Adysen Silvius and I am a senior at Central High School.

There are moments in life when you have to decide who you really are, not just who you say you are. One of those moments for me happened during volleyball season, a time that means a lot to me. Being part of a team has always taught me about trust, accountability, and doing your part—not just for yourself, but for everyone around you. That's why the situation I faced made my decision so difficult.

It started during a game that we had worked really hard for. We were playing a tough team, and every point mattered. During one play, the ball came down close to the line on our side of the court. I was one of the closest players to it, and I saw clearly that the ball had touched the line—meaning it was in. However, the referee called it out, giving

our team the point. My teammates immediately celebrated, and the energy in the

gym shifted in our favor.

In that moment, I froze. I knew the call was wrong. No one else seemed to question it, and the referee had already made the decision. The easy thing to do would have been to stay quiet, take the point, and move on. After all, it wasn't technically my responsibility to correct the call, and winning that game was important to all of us. I could feel the pressure—both from the intensity of the game and from not wanting to let my team down.

But at the same time, something didn't feel right. I kept thinking about what sports are really supposed to stand for — honesty, respect, and integrity. From my perspective, accepting a point that we didn't truly earn felt wrong. However, I also considered my teammates' perspective. They were focused on winning and trusting the officials, and speaking up might have frustrated them or made it seem like I was putting the other team first. I also thought about the coach and how they expect us to play with character, not just skill.

After a few seconds that felt like forever, I made my decision. I walked over and told the referee that the ball had actually hit the line and should be the other team's point. The gym got quiet for a moment, and I could feel everyone's attention shift. Some of my teammates looked surprised, and I could tell not everyone agreed with what I did. It wasn't an easy thing to do, especially in the middle of such an important game.

The referee reversed the call, and the point was given to the other team. For a moment, I worried that I had hurt our chances of winning or let my teammates down. But something unexpected happened. My coach nodded at me, and later told me they were proud of me for being honest. Even

though it cost us a point, it showed something bigger than the scoreboard — it showed character.

That moment stuck with me. It taught me that doing the right thing isn't always popular, and it isn't always easy, especially when there's pressure from others or when something important is on the line. But it also showed me that integrity matters more than a single point or even a single game.

Looking back, I would absolutely make the same decision again. If anything, I would do it with even more confidence. I've learned that staying true to your values is more important than temporary success. I also learned that leadership isn't just about being the loudest or the best player — it's about setting an example, even when it's uncomfortable.

If I could change anything, I would try to communicate more with my teammates afterward and explain my reasoning, so they could better understand my perspective. I realized that doing the right thing is important, but helping others see why it matters is just as valuable.

This experience shaped me not only as an athlete, but as a person. It reminded me that my actions reflect who I am, especially when no one expects me to speak up. Choosing what is right over what is easy showed me the kind of person I want to be — someone who stands for honesty, even when it's difficult.

In the end, that single moment on the court became about much more than volleyball. It became a reminder that character is built through the choices we make, and that doing the right thing is always worth it.

Adysen Silvius was a graduating senior at Central High School in the 2025-2026 school year.

A Personal Decision: How I Made a Choice Between Right and Wrong

By Elizabeth Whetzel

A situation that challenged me to choose between right and wrong occurred during my sophomore year while working on a group project in my World Civilizations class. The assignment was a major grade in the class, and everyone in our group was required to contribute equally. However, as our deadline came closer, it was made clear that one member of our group hadn't been completing their portion of the assignment.

At first, our group tried to be understanding. We made excuses for them and asked if they needed help, and reminded them that the project deadline was quickly approaching. They assured us they would complete their part, but as time passed, little progress was made. This put the other members of our group in a difficult position. We could either submit the incomplete project as it was, knowing it was unfinished, and simply take the lower grade. Or we could complete their portion of the project ourselves and play it off as the other members work. There was also the option of informing our teacher, but that felt uncomfortable because it could seem that we were trying to get a classmate in trouble.

This situation made me feel especially conflicted because I didn't want to seem like I was being unsympathetic. However, at the same time, I knew that allowing one person to receive credit for work they didn't do wasn't right. I also thought about how this situation related to my future career in nursing. In healthcare, teamwork is essential; each person is responsible for their role. If someone fails to do their part or complete the role, it can directly harm patients and co-workers. This helped me realize that

accountability is not just about getting a grade, it's also about responsibility.

As a group, my classmates and I discussed our options. One member felt we should simply finish the project ourselves to avoid any conflict and spare our grades at the same time. Another believed that we should speak with our teacher to make sure the situation was handled fairly. I did my best to consider both sides. On one hand, finishing the work ourselves would be easier short-term, we could keep our grades up and make sure the project was done correctly. However, this solution didn't actually address the issue. On the other hand, talking to the teacher would possibly be uncomfortable, but it would be the fairest and most honest solution.

Before we made the final decision, we decided to speak to the group member one more time, so we could clearly explain how their lack of participation was hurting everyone. Unfortunately, our situation didn't improve. At this point, we decided to approach our teacher as a group. We conducted the conversation respectfully and fully explained the situation without placing blame or speaking negatively about our classmate. We simply did our best to explain the facts and ask for guidance.

Our teacher appreciated our honesty and handled the situation in the fairest manner they could. Our group was graded based on the work we completed, and the other student was evaluated separately. The outcome felt fair because each person's grade reflected the effort they put forth.

This experience taught me several lessons. I learned that communication is essential when dealing with any conflict and that allowing others the opportunity to fix their mistakes is important. I also learned that standing up for what is right doesn't mean being harsh or disrespectful; it can

be done fairly and calmly. But most importantly, I learned the value of accountability and teamwork.

If I were faced with a similar situation today, I would handle the situation the same way. I believe we took the right steps by first trying to resolve the issue on our own within our group, then seeking out help when it was necessary. Our approach allowed us to be both respectful and fair. As I prepare to enter nursing school, I know that these skills, communication and responsibility, will be essential. In a healthcare setting, it is important to speak up when something isn't right. However, it is vital to do so while also showing compassion and professionalism.

In conclusion, this challenging situation helped me grow by forcing me to critically think about what is right and wrong. It showed me that difficult decisions often require balancing both fairness and empathy, and that doing the right thing isn't always the easiest thing. The lessons I learned will continue to guide me forward in both my education and future career as a nurse.

Elizabeth Whetzel was a graduating senior at Central High School in the 2025-2026 school year.

WASH Logo Merch

Get cool WASH logo apparel and other merchandise at our online Zazzle store. We have stuff with both WASH main and chapter logos. Check it out!

https://www.zazzle.com/store/wash_store

Dawkins and Group Selection

by Bill Creasy

Richard Dawkins has been one of the main advocates of biological or genetic evolution for 50 years. He has been prolific and poetic in his writing of books that have provided volumes of evidence that support genetic evolution in the plant and animal kingdoms, his primary interest. His book *The Selfish Gene*¹ is a classic work of explaining how genetic evolution works.

[*The Selfish Gene*, Oxford University Press, 1976; 40th Anniversary Edition, 2016; 50th Anniversary Edition is coming out.]

However, his treatment of group selection has been a negative influence. It wasn't a focus of *The Selfish Gene*¹, except for the first chapter, but because of his influence and eloquence, he may have delayed the study of group selection.

Group selection is more complex than genetic evolution, which functions based on information in DNA that is essentially binary coding for proteins. Group selection is important for human behavior, but it can often be neglected for the nonhuman species that Dawkins focused on.

It is important to quote him in context to clearly identify his criticism. Most of the first chapter of *The Selfish Gene* refutes group selection in a superficial way. He gives a short description of his definition of group selection:

A group, such as a species or a population within a species, whose individual members are prepared to sacrifice themselves for the welfare of the group, may be less likely to go extinct than a rival group whose individual members place their own selfish interests first. Therefore the world becomes populated mainly by groups consisting of self-sacrificing individuals.

Dawkins credits this formulation of group selection to books by V. C. Wynne-Edwards and Robert Ardrey, although versions of it go back to Charles Darwin. It is notable that Dawkins uses rather emotionally charged language including "sacrifice themselves," which implies a life-or-death, all-or-nothing action rather than a matter of gradually improved fitness.

He discounts this theory by writing:

Even in the group of altruists, there will almost certainly be a dissenting minority who refuses to make any sacrifice. If there is just one selfish rebel prepared to exploit the altruism of the rest, then he, by definition, is more likely than they are to survive and have children. Each of these children will tend to inherit his selfish traits.

This is a valid criticism in the most primitive cases, but not all cases. It can be rebutted nearly as easily as it is stated. The rebuttal is that a selfish "cheater" in a group of altruistic or prosocial people can only succeed as long as the other people in the group let them succeed and don't do anything to stop the cheating. If the group members react negatively to punish the cheater, then selfishness to take advantage of group membership will be suppressed.

In order to discourage a selfish cheater, it only takes enough disincentive to the cheater to outweigh the benefit that the cheater gets from being in the group, so that cheating isn't "worth it." But the members of the group that is being exploited don't have the same limit. They can give out as much punishment as they see fit. They can give a death sentence for stealing a loaf of bread. They can give torture for making negative comments about their deity.

The disproportionate nature of these punishments provides a serious restraint on people as they anticipate the consequences of

cheating. The cheater doesn't only have to get enough benefit for cheating to be worth it. They also have to benefit enough to justify a potential serious disadvantage or injury inflicted from their victims. We can imagine a bank robber who is discouraged from stealing a few hundred dollars, but may consider a heist of millions. The bar is raised for the benefit that's worth it.

The act of punishment is a prosocial activity that requires selfless acts by group members to benefit the group. As a result, there has to be a way to share the burden among group members in a fair way. For most of human prehistory, it is possible that there wasn't a cultural acceptance of the need to share the effort, and punishment wasn't done in ways that prevented cheating. In these cases, Dawkins is correct that a cheater would benefit and disrupt the group. Dawkins could be correct for 99% of the time that humans have existed on earth. But times have changed with the rise of societies.

However, it also seems that humans have an innate urge to have fair relationships and to want justice. Even primates have behaviors related to punishing unfairness. This kind of behavior is not rational in the sense that it doesn't benefit an individual, unless the individual is intentionally being prosocial for the group.

Since the development of civilization and of large groups, human ingenuity has come up with many mechanisms for punishment of cheaters and rule-breakers that are fair in an acceptable way. Institutions have been established for law enforcement. Human culture has evolved to punish cheaters. If it hadn't, we wouldn't have modern civilization and all the benefits of technology, organization, and specialization that have come with it.

The development of these methods to prevent cheating is, in itself, evidence for cultural

evolution. Even a problem like cheating, that may appear intractable, can be addressed by methods that develop by cultural evolution. Variation provides new methods that can be tried. The successful methods are preserved and reproduced to pass down over time to new generations of people and to new cultures that spin off. This provides a mechanism for social progress.

Dawkins used the cheater problem to reject group selection in a general way. He seemed to hedge his bets by conceding that there is uncertainty:

The muddle in human ethics over the level at which altruism is desirable—family, nation, race, species, or all living things—is mirrored by a parallel muddle in biology over the level at which altruism is to be expected according to the theory of evolution.

The use of the word “muddle” implies something indeterminate, although the British connotations may be lost. Dawkins is correct when he says human behavior is hard to predict. He used this “muddle” to justify viewing evolution from the scale of genes, as the only level that makes sense. Dawkins then discusses genetic evolution for the rest of the book, and his explanations are inspiring. There are particular rules and properties of genes based on the system of information storage and the molecular properties of DNA that is remarkable to understand. Dawkins discussed the distinction between replicators and vehicles with regard to genetic evolution. These kinds of explanations reveal the reasons for the diversity of life on Earth.

But why does his valid study of genetic evolution exclude the study of evolution at the level of family, nation, race, species, or all living things, if study of those levels can be justified? He wrote in the Introduction to the 30th Anniversary Edition of *The Selfish Gene*,

Does natural selection choose between species? If so, we might expect individual organisms to behave altruistically 'for the good

of the species.' They might limit their birth rates to avoid overpopulation, or restrain their hunting behaviour to conserve the species' future stocks of prey. It was such widely disseminated misunderstandings of Darwinism that originally provoked me to write the book.

His book was written to refute certain versions of group selection, but in the process, he tried to refute all versions. He didn't change his mind about group selection after having 40 years and several editions of *The Selfish Gene*¹. He continued,

The critical question is: Which level in the hierarchy of life will turn out to be the inevitably 'selfish' level, at which natural selection acts? The Selfish Species? The Selfish Group? The Selfish Organism? The Selfish Ecosystem? Most of these could be argued, and most have been uncritically assumed by one or another author, but all of them are wrong.

It is a valid approach in science to point out ideas that are wrong. Wrong ideas do exist, even if they may seem rational from certain perspectives. But like his use of the word "muddle," his dismissal of entire fields of study in a few words without a real argument or reason is not prudent. It's difficult to make absolute statements by rejecting all counterarguments out of hand. This statement is a matter of Dawkins's opinion since he doesn't justify it. He is being just as uncritical as the authors that he is dismissing.

In science, it is important to look at problems in many different ways. It is necessary to find the right model in which the system can be understood. A problem that seems impossibly complex from one perspective can be tractable in another point of view. Saying a model isn't ever useful is to say that some problems will never need to be solved or understood. That seems to require a kind of omniscience about the subject matter.

Dawkins has been interested in understanding the origin of human cooperation. He wrote that he

was "hugely intrigued by the ideas" of Robert Axelrod to have a competition between computer programs to demonstrate the origin of cooperation. Dawkins wrote chapters about the results in later editions of *The Selfish Gene*¹. He acknowledged that it is a valid field of study, but after dismissing using group selection as a way to study it.

Group selection in humans can't be complete without an examination of Dawkins and his writing about group selection because the book was influential. He raised valid problems that must be addressed. But his uncategorical dismissal of all kinds of group selection is disturbingly close to an admission that it is too complicated to understand, and therefore that we shouldn't try to understand. It leaves Dawkins without a good mechanism for explaining society-wide cooperation of modern humans. He doesn't give any theory to approach social problems or to understand social progress. These theories would be very helpful to modern humanism.

A social problem caused by the popularity of Dawkins's work is that many people may not get past the title or first chapter. If people don't get further than the title, they may assume the concept that biology implies that selfishness is normal. That title gives the impression that he argued that evolution is purely selfish in a way that extends to human morality. His interest in cooperation is lost in his leading point is that life is selfish.

Hidden later in the book is the point that life can give rise to cooperation. Most people know that they cooperate. It comes as a second nature, and society wouldn't work without it. That is obvious from human society. Members of a group often have had to learn to cooperate because the alternative may be to lose a war against another group that may kill them. Cooperation wasn't

freely chosen, in that case, but it was forced on them, and then it evolved.

But some people want an excuse to be selfish outside of the historical context. Those who want to act selfishly can use Dawkins's work as a justification for their behavior. Dawkins, as an author of a popularized science book, has mentioned his awareness of the impression that the book gives. This is particularly true in the current political and economic climate. Oligarchic billionaires seem to be intent on being trillionaires by looking out for themselves. President Trump is intent on finding the best ways to financially benefit himself, his family, and his followers at the government's expense.

Another social problem has to do with Dawkins's other writing passion concerning atheism and anti-supernaturalism. His book *The God Delusion*² helped to begin a social movement away from religious influence in U.S. government and society. Many atheists and humanists respect Dawkins for his leadership. But the fact that he seems to advocate selfishness has been a weakness for the foundation of atheism. Those people who are religious argue that a society without religion is immoral and can't support cooperation or common interests. This may not be what Dawkins intends. But again, his arguments about biology damage an argument to the contrary, namely that life can naturally develop cooperation without supernatural intervention.

Group selection is more complex than genetic selection. Each individual, at each moment, can decide to cooperate with the group or defect to do something for their own benefit. The decisions depend sensitively on what one individual thinks the others are going to do. These decisions are so difficult for anyone else to anticipate that the decisions can safely be called free will because they are unpredictable. But if it were impossible

to predict, or completely random, then society wouldn't work. No one could rely on anyone else.

But instead society does work. It acts like a machine that regularly provides the necessities of life to its members. It doesn't work perfectly, but it works well enough to support 8 billion people. So I would argue that human behavior is not a "muddle," and it works predictably and according to rules. Group selection should be studied to find out how to make it work better.

[1] Dawkins, Richard. 2016. *The Selfish Gene*: 40th Anniversary Edition. London, England: Oxford University Press.

[2] Dawkins, Richard. 2016. *The God Delusion*. London, England: Black Swan.

Bill Creasy is the secretary of WASH. This essay is an excerpt from his book, Making a Happy Society II: Study the Controversy, available on Amazon.com. [Amazon.com: Making a Happy Society II: Study the Controversy \(Making a Happy Society series Book 2\) eBook : Creasy, William R.: Kindle Store](#)

Editor's Note: WASH respects Richard Dawkins as an evolutionary biologist, but we do not support or condone some of his social commentaries such as his opposition to trans rights.



Chapter Reports

Baltimore Secular Humanists (BSH)

BSH has meetings a various times and places around Baltimore, Baltimore County, and Hartford County. Watch the meetup site for the latest events: <https://www.meetup.com/bsh-wash/>

There are also several other non-WASH meetup groups in the Baltimore area, including Human Values Network Meetup and Baltimore Atheists that hold monthly discussion groups. BSH also posts notices of university lectures that are held in-person or on Zoom. These are posted with about a week's notice.

We have posted events that are sponsored by Profs & Pints with lectures from university professors. They charge an admission fee. Some of their past lectures can be found online here.

Frederick Secular Humanists (FRESH)

FRESH meets twice monthly in Frederick, MD. Our regular meetings are held on either the third or fourth Sunday of each month (based upon library availability) at the C. Burr Artz Public Library at 110 E. Patrick St., Frederick, MD 21701. Occasionally, if that venue is not available, we will meet at the Urbana Regional Library at 9020 Amelung St., Frederick, MD 21704.

FRESH has finished its third annual Clothesline Project, a public awareness event for survivors of power-based violence.

Kicking off the summer:

Mike will give a tour of the Hall of Human Origins exhibit at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History where he has been a volunteer for many years on July 26th, meeting first at the Elephant & Castle pub for brunch at 11 am.

Rob Boston, recently retired from Americans United for Separation of Church and State, will talk to us about church-state separation on August 23rd 1:30 pm at the C. Burr Artz Public Library in Frederick.

FRESH will be tabling at Frederick's In the Streets Festival on Saturday, September 12th.

Our annual picnic will be held on September 30th at Noon at Pine Cliff Park in Frederick. Hope to see you!

Additionally, FRESH meets on the second Sunday of each month at 6 pm for an informal social hour at the Brewer's Alley restaurant at 124 N. Market St., Frederick, MD 21701. Our events are announced on our Meetup Page.

For more information, please visit our webpage at <http://wash.org/fresh>

For event details please visit our Meetup Page: <https://www.meetup.com/fresh-wash/>

All are welcome to attend our events, but an RSVP on Meetup is appreciated.

DC Atheists, Humanists & Agnostics (DC-AHA)

DC-Atheists, Humanists, and Agnostics group (DC-AHA) meets at Madhatter (1319 Connecticut Ave NW, DuPont Circle) for happy hour the first Wednesday of the month at 6-8pm. The next happy hour on August 5th at 6 pm.

<https://www.meetup.com/DC-Atheists->

Shenandoah Area Secular Humanists (SASH)

SASH (Shenandoah Area Secular Humanists) continues its pattern of online meetings. Each month, the second Sunday morning is a two-hour discussion on a topic pertinent to humanists. Our August meeting will be about the sociological roots of secularism. This meeting will be advertised on MeetUp. SASH also hosts a monthly book club meeting online on the last Sunday morning of each month. In July, we'll discuss Howard Smith's *Man and His Gods*, an older book yet still very pertinent. For more information on our activities, SASH can be contacted at sash@wash.org.

<https://www.meetup.com/shenandoah-area-secular-humanists/>

DC Region Atheists (DCRA)

We host a Secular Zoom Community meeting on the second Thursday of each month at 7 pm. We nourish our connections with like-minded secular people and discuss a broad range of topics on religion, science and secularism. Please RSVP for a monthly meeting at:

<https://www.meetup.com/dc-atheists>

Southeast Virginia Atheists, Skeptics & Humanists (SEVASH)

The SEVASH calendar remains quite busy with all of our regularly scheduled social events across the Greater Hampton Roads area, from Virginia Beach to Williamsburg, which has included gaming socials, weekly team trivia, brunches, dinners, coffee get-togethers, etc. Our recently added monthly Sober Sunday meetup event is gaining in popularity, so we'll definitely keep this as a regular/recurring event.

SEVASH volunteers continue our mutual aid efforts stocking and maintaining our Free Food Pantries in both Norfolk and Newport News, as well as working with the LGBT Life Center's Pride Pantry. We were awarded with a \$500 grant to help keep our pantries stocked as part of the American Humanist Association's American Empathy Project, and we hosted a public event for this effort on Sunday, May 3rd at Elation Brewing in Norfolk. In addition to the funding, AHA provided project guides, event promotion, and support throughout the entire planning process. In helping us promote the event, we had some new folks show up to support our cause.

Our Free Little Humanist Library in Norfolk continues to be actively used, especially with the recent addition of books and DVDs contributed by the American Humanist Association

All of this of course is in addition to our regular schedule of dinners, brunches, team trivia and other social / gaming events.

SEVASH events are announced on

<https://www.meetup.com/sevash/>

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

Maryland-DC Chapter (MDC)

MDC events are posted at <https://www.meetup.com/wash-202/>.

MDC will co-host with NVC an winery visit on July 19th at 2 pm at Stone Tower Winery. Please see the [NVC announcement](#) for details.

Northern Virginia Chapter (NVC)

NVC announces its events on the main WASH Meetup page. For upcoming events, please check

<https://www.meetup.com/humanism-218/>

Please join us for a talk

A Guide for Reaching Families and Young Adults in the Secular Community

FEATURING

Katie Hladky-Grant

Camp Quest



**SUNDAY,
JULY 26**



**7:00 PM
EASTERN**

For your invite, email clyde@wash.org

Washington Area Secular Humanists

Speaker Series



3rd Annual WASH Winery Visit

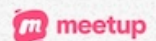
Jul
19

2:00 PM

📍 19925 Hogback Mountain Road, Stone Tower...

Attend on *m*

By Washington Area Secular Humanists
Meetup Group



Atheists, Agnostics, and Secular Humanists of Richmond (AASHR)

We serve the greater Richmond, VA area. Our events are announced on

<https://www.meetup.com/aashr-wash>

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

July 18 at 7 pm

Dogwood Dell Amphitheater

Join us at Dogwood Dell Amphitheater to enjoy the music Prince, performed by Richmond native Anthony Cosby Jr.

No dogs are allowed. Parking and concert are free.

The show starts at 8, but I plan to get there between 6:30 and 7 to claim an area. I will bring some games and something to eat. We can hang out before the show. Bring your own food, beverage, and chairs if you want. I'll try to set up about 4 rows back near the center.

July 18 at 7 pm

One of our members is a docent at VMFA and she has offered to guide our group for a tour of the exhibit, Titus Kaphar and Junius Brutus Stearns: Pictures More Famous than the Truth. This exhibit is ending July 26. This is free.

For information on the exhibit: <https://www.vmfa.museum/exhibitions/titus-kaphar-and-junius-brutus-stearns-pictures-more-famous-than-the-truth>

This is limited for 18 so sign up on our Meetup if you want to go, and be sure to cancel if your plans change.

Expect the tour to last 50-60 minutes and then spend time afterward discussing or enjoying the rest of the museum.

Unofficially, we can gather for brunch/lunch afterward or get some ice cream at Scoop or both!

July 29 at 6:30 pm

Benchtop Brewing, 434 Hull St., Richmond

Heatherly Hodges, president of WASH, will be in town and coming by. Even if trivia isn't your vibe, come on by and say hi. We'll have our good conversation as usual. Meet between 6:30 and 7. Trivia starts at 7. Trivia is hosted by Cap City Trivia.

Benchtop Brewing is based out of Norfolk and the Richmond tasting room has been around for a few years. They serve gourmet hot dogs and snacks along with an assortment of brews.

August 9 at 3 pm

Three Notch'd Brewery 2930 W Broad Street · Richmond, VA

Drinking Liberally

Let's join the Drinking Liberally group for their second Sunday gathering at Three Notch'd to discuss local and national politics. Our group has many overlapping and like-minded members, including Donna, who is an organizer with Drinking Liberally.

Drinking Liberally Richmond is a group for people with like-minded liberal views. They meet on the second Sunday of each month.

Lynchburg Area Secular Humanists (LASH)

LASH has been dormant for a while. We are trying to get it goin again. If you live in the Lynchburg area, please join us for our kickoff meeting. This is just a social event. We will meet at a restaurant and discuss what people want this chapter to be and what sort of activities we want. WASH president Heatherly Hodges will be there to get things moving. Come join your fellow secularists!

August 1, 2026 at 1pm

Neighbor's Place Restaurant

104 Paulette Cir, Lynchburg, VA 24502

Please RSVP to lash@wash.org or [on Meetup](#).

Other Chapters

For information on WASH's other chapters, please see the Chapter Contact Information on the chapter

The Secular Advocacy Teams

American Atheists has organized Secular Advocacy Teams (SAT) to address state-level threats to church-state separation and secular values. Maryland and Virginia are two of the states with active SATs.

The legislative sessions for both states have concluded for this year, but the MD and VA SATs are still active and preparing for the 2027 sessions.

GET Involved!

If you live in Virginia and would like to get involved in the VA SAT, please contact American Atheists Virginia State Director Aiden Barnes at abarnes@atheists.org.

If you live in Maryland and would like to get involved in the MD SAT, please contact American Atheists Maryland State Director Mike Reid at mike.reid@atheists.org.



Get Involved! Join the WASH Board

Would you like to help
steer the direction that

WASH goes now and in the future? We have vacancies on our Board of Directors. We need volunteers with fresh ideas who care about the future of secular society and the separation of church and state. Please contact WASH president Heatherly Hodges if interested.

heatherly@wash.org

WASH Contact Information

Web: www.wash.org

US Mail:

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Frederick, MD 21705

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WASH Volunteers

Heatherly Hodges, *President*

Bill Creasy, *Secretary*

Matt DeGrave, *Treasurer*

Mike Reid, *WASHline Editor*

Chapter Contact Information

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3. Hartford County Secular Humanists (HCSH)

(A Subgroup of BSH)
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6. DC Region Atheists (DCRA)

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7. Frederick Secular Humanists (FRESH)

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8. Fredericksburg Secular Humanists (FSH)

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9. Atheists, Agnostics, and Secular Humanists of Richmond (AASHR)

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10. Lynchburg Area Secular Humanists (LASH)

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12. Shenandoah Area Secular Humanists (SASH)

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13. Southeastern Virginia Atheists, Skeptics & Humanists (SEVASH)

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14. Secular Humanists of Roanoke (SHOR)

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15. Southern Maryland Secular Humanists (SMASH)

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