Since its inception, the North Texas Church of Freethought has sought to provide an environment for the children of freethinkers that nurtures our shared values, such as a love for science, critical thinking, and the drive to explore and understand the beauty of the world around us. That mission continues as strongly today as it did fifteen years ago, and we encourage all freethinking parents in our midst to partner with us to develop their child’s natural freethinking instincts. We also encourage all of our members to take advantage of this fantastic resource to help pass on their skills and knowledge, and perhaps to inspire a young person to follow their bliss.

Dale McGowan, the co-author of “Raising Freethinkers” (and friend of the NTCOF), observed in that book that,

“It’s the human impulse to wonder and ask questions that eventually gave birth to both religion and science, two different ways of responding to the same challenge: an overdeveloped neocortex hungry for answers.”

continued on Page 2
In “Raising Freethinkers,” Dale McGowan draws from nine “best practices for nonreligious parenting:”

“I. Encourage ever-widening circles of empathy. Worldview, race, nationalism, and various other characteristics cut us off from empathy with the rest of humanity. Nonreligious parents should encourage their children to reach beyond such artificial boundaries.

2. Encourage active moral development. Children can and should be encouraged to develop active moral reasoning by understanding the reasons to be and do good.

3. Promote ravenous curiosity. An active and insatiable curiosity is the key to learning and the engine of a productive and engaged life.

4. Teach engaged coexistence. Religion in some form will always be with us. Our job is to raise kids to coexist with religion while engaging and challenging its adherents to make its effects more human - and inviting the same in return.

5. Encourage religious literacy. Children must be made knowledgable about religion without being indoctrinated into religion.

6. Leave kids unlabeled. Calling a child a “Christian” or an “atheist” is counterproductive to encouraging genuine freethought. It is just as dishonest to label a child with a complex worldview as to call her a “Republican” or a “Marxist.”

7. Make death natural and familiar. By shielding our children too completely from the contemplation of death, we set them up for a much more difficult and dysfunctional adult relationship with mortality.

8. Invite the questioning of authority. At the heart of freethought is the rejection of the argument from authority. Encourage children to ask for the reasons behind rules and the reasoning behind answers.

9. Normalize disbelief. There is no greater contribu-}

All of these practices are a part of the NTCOF experience that we strive to instill in our children, and the most recent manifestation of that was Camp Quest Texas, which was enthusiastically supported by the NTCOF through the leadership of Camp Director (and mother to Joseph and Addie), Amie Parsons. Living in Texas, providing an oasis of rationality to our children can be even more important - as Amanda Metskas, Executive Director of Camp Quest, explains in “Raising Freethinkers:”

“Depending on where you live, your family’s beliefs may be controversial among the parents of your children’s schoolmates and peers. Some children from freethinking families are singled out for harassment at school, told they are untrustworthy, evil, or damned to hell. Coaches, teachers, or activity leaders have been known to punish children who don’t participate in a team prayer or religious activity that ‘everyone else’ is doing. For kids facing prejudices or bullying because of their beliefs, it is especially important to have a network of other freethinkers in their lives. Knowing that there are others like them and their families can help kids understand that they aren’t alone and serve as a source of support as they seek to stand up for their beliefs and educate their classmates about who they are and what they think.”

At the NTCOF, we count ourselves fortunate to have set the standard for secular groups in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex who want to provide a community for freethinking families. We hope that our church can continue to nurture and support the needs of our children, and that our investment in their education enriches society for us all.

**THINK ABOUT IT!**
SEPTEMBER EVENTS

All NTCOF events can be found through our website calendar, or through our Meetup.com site.

Please check these locations regularly, and RSVP through Meetup.

Social Luncheon: Today, immediately after our Service, join us for lunch and friendly discussion at Jason’s Deli in Irving, located just south of I-635 on MacArthur, at 7770 N. MacArthur Blvd., phone (972) 432-0555. Easy driving directions: To reach Jason’s from the Holiday Inn: turn RIGHT out of the parking lot onto Esters Blvd., RIGHT onto Freeport Parkway, RIGHT to enter I-635 EAST. Exit I-635 at MacArthur Blvd., then RIGHT onto MacArthur, and RIGHT again just ahead into the Jason’s parking lot.

Pub Night: Formerly called the Freethought Forum, we’ll be meeting at unique local pubs with great beer selections and great conversation. This month, we’ll be at Trinity Hall Irish Pub & Restaurant in Dallas on September 18th, and then next month we’ll be at Delaney’s Irish Pub in McKinney.

Movie Night: Join us for a night of freethinking and film! Bring your favorite beverages and snacks to share! This month, “The Man From Earth.” Meet at Zach Moore’s house on Saturday, September 12th at 8:00 PM, and bring plenty of beverages and snacks to share. Due to limited space, be sure to RSVP through Meetup.com!

Secular Singles: The Freethinking NTCOF Singles meets at the Vineyard restaurant in the Hilton DFW Lakes Executive Conference Center in Grapevine (1800 Highway 26 East).

Women’s Group: Do you miss getting to spend quality time with female friends? Want a comfortable place to chat without all those pesky men around? Come on out to the newly-formed NTCOF Women’s Group, where there will be knitting lessons, conversation, and lots of female freethinking fun! Next meeting is Sunday, September 20th at 7:00 PM at Brenda Magee’s home.

AUGUST FORUM ChATTER

The following is a sampling of the ongoing discussions held at the NTCOF forum through the past month - log on to add your two cents!

shipman: “My wife finds herself jealously reading the Twitter exchanges of some of her friends and seeing the great sense of community and support they get from their church friends. However, we just can’t bring ourselves to compromise and go to a church when we just don’t believe in it and have nothing in common with most of the people there. I mused aloud that “I wish there were groups of atheists/agnostics that provided some of the benefits of a church family, but without all the superstitious BS that comes along with that”. I was pleasantly surprised to find your site for that reason.”

CosmicPerspective: “My grandfather used to say variations of “Your rights end where my nose begins” and/or “your rights end where mine begin.” What does that look like when governments try to enforce it? And when do the children you mentioned get to assert their own rights? Or have their rights asserted for them?”

DeedNotCreed: “I’m pretty big supporter of the ACLU (most of the time) and an especially big supporter of the prohibition against prayers in school lead by authority figures. But should an after-school banquet at a Florida school attended only by adults to recognize school booster adult members of the community (nearly all of whom are not teachers or school administrators) result in potential fines and jail time for the coach who said a short prayer before the meal and the principal who asked him to say the prayer? Has an invisible line of reasonableness been crossed here?”

pastortim: “The phenomenon that gave rise to the idea of halos was probably that of the “glory.” When you ride in an airplane you are apt to see these but in the olden days the only way you could get high up like that was in the mountains. Dr. Bernard Leikind spoke to us about that at an NTCOF service back in 1998.”

BrandonBlair: “You guys have some great kids! It was an absolute pleasure working with Bouncy Ben, Peppy Perrin, Bountiful Bridget, and the rest of the gang...Witnessing that genuine spark of interest at their new environment, and the spirited manner in which they carried on, was a source of great joy to me. I’m thankful you were all gracious enough to loan them for a few hours. I am very excited about ideas cropping up for the week-long iteration next year. There are some very cool things on the horizon...”

Find more lively discussion at: www.churchoffreethought.org/bb
THANKS TO CATHY’S CRITTERS!

Cathy’s Critters is a fun-for-all-ages mobile petting zoo bringing an educational, clean, and safe animal adventure to your next event.

Use of their farm was donated to the North Texas Church of Freethought for the 2009 Camp Quest Texas

Please remember them the next time you’d like to provide a unique experience for your next birthday party, block party, or special event!

www.cathys-critters.com

TEXAS FREETHOUGHT CONVENTION

Please mark your calendars today and make travel reservations to come to beautiful San Antonio on Saturday, November 14th!
texasfreethoughtconvention.com

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The September 2009 issue of the NTCOF bulletin was sponsored by Pro-Count, Inc, who will donate $40 to the NTCOF on behalf of any NTCOF member who enrolls and completes Concealed Handgun License training through this school. To sign up for the class, please visit:

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