



The mission of the Center for Inquiry is to foster a secular society based on science, reason, freedom of inquiry, and humanist values.

CFI has established centers throughout the world which provide a means of delivering educational programs and services on a local level and provide a venue for like-minded individuals to meet and share experiences.

In aiming to foster a secular society, we do not seek to abridge the rights of believers. We vigorously object to government support of religion and the use of religious dogma to justify public policy; we do not oppose the free exercise of religion. The secular society we are building is a community of reason and compassion in which the dignity and fundamental rights of all individuals are respected.

Three goals represent the focus of our activities: an end to the influence that religion and pseudoscience have on public policy, an end to the privileged position that religion and pseudoscience continue to enjoy in many societies, and an end to the stigma attached to being a nonbeliever.

## **SOS: Non-religious help for addicts and alcoholics**

by Jerry Reed  
CFI-Rogue Valley Freethinkers

**W**HERE DOES A PERSON IN YOUR family or community get help with their addiction to alcohol or drugs which are ruining their life, creating a mess for everyone around them, and breaking the hearts of their loved ones? The only hope for about 98% of them is Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, or a similar “Twelve Step” group, unless you’re wealthy and willing to spend a lot for better care for them. Even then, once they complete some kind of intensive care, they are usually referred to a twelve-step group for on-going support for the rest of their lives. Chances are near 100% you know someone near and dear in this predicament.

There, in the twelve-step group, they are made to believe that the only hope for controlling their irrational, self-destructive addiction is to replace it with rejection of their own capacity to manage their behavior and to accept an irrational dependence on a “higher power” rather than to rely on themselves. They are told



they are powerless and yet they are also told it is entirely up to them to make the necessary decisions and to act on them. Does that sound contradictory and disempowering? It is.

The logical inconsistencies, the embracing of a new irrational belief system to counter their irrational dysfunctional behavior, the required submission to a super spirit that many view with healthy reasonable skepticism are major obstacles to success in these groups. So, most just drop out. Irrational thinking, including religiosity, is not the solution to irrational dysfunctional behavior; it’s the cause of it. And yet, that is almost universally the only “hope” being offered to them. Until just recently.

“The SOS movement began with the article ‘Sobriety without Superstition’ in the Summer 1985 issue of the secular humanist journal *Free Inquiry*. James Christopher, a sober alcoholic and son of an alcoholic, wrote an account of the path he took to sobriety. He felt that there must be others who want to achieve and maintain sobriety through personal responsibility and self-reliance.

*Cont’d on page 2*

As a result of the tremendous response to the article from addicted individuals who wanted to maintain sobriety, Christopher founded the Secular Organizations for Sobriety, Save Our Selves. Today there are SOS groups around the country and around the world.” (from *The SOS Alternative: A Manual for Treatment Providers*, 2009).

In Grants Pass, the Rogue Valley Free-thinkers agreed with Christopher’s reasoning and added that so long as only religiously-based support groups exist to offer hope to people in trouble, humanists will be ceding the vital community support role to churches. And, that shouldn’t be. We felt that it’s our responsibility to offer a rational alternative. So, in June of this year we started our own SOS group, meeting weekly at an excellent facility provided at no charge by our local hospital at their Outpatient Services center.

Frankly, SOS - Grants Pass is still in ‘start up’ mode, with just two or three of us attending each week at this point. We have begun posting notices on available bulletin boards and handing flyers out to friends who may know someone in need of help. As the news gets out, we’re confident interested people will begin coming.

We look to other regional SOS groups for shared support in starting and improving our group -- and theirs. And, we look also to continued support from Jim Christopher and SOS staff at the SOS International headquarters at CFI West in Los Angeles. For more information you can get to their website at <http://www.cfiwest.org/sos/index.htm>. At that site you can access the latest SOS newsletter by going to the paragraph on the SOS Newsletter and clicking on the link to ‘view the latest issue’.

So, what is SOS? First, a little about what SOS is NOT: It is not a program based on any religion. It does not suggest that a “higher power” or anyone else is going to solve your problems for you. It is not a twelve-step program; however it does offer some guidelines about how to achieve sobriety. And, it definitely does not try to persuade you that you are powerless. Nor, do we end our meetings by holding hands and reciting the Lord’s Prayer.

SOS does expect you to hold yourself responsible, but it offers the support of other group members struggling with similar dysfunctional addictive behavior who share their stories, experiences and advice in an honest, supportive, anonymous, confidential group environment. And, it offers guidance based on rational behavior change principles. We ask each partici-

pant to make a commitment to change and emphasize that change is your personal responsibility. To the extent that you succeed, the achievement is attributed to you.

SOS groups have considerable freedom and flexibility to adapt their process to their own needs and preferences. Members are expected to take ownership of their group and to maintain it. Funding is very frugal, based on no fees, just acceptance of small voluntary donations at each meeting, intended to cover just actual operating expenses, including support materials.

SOS has various support materials, which can be accessed by calling Jim Christopher’s office at (323)666-4295 or going online at the web address given above. To begin with, you should ask for the “SOS Guidebook for Group Leaders” and “The SOS Alternative: A Manual for Treatment Providers”. Locally, other SOS group facilitators are generally happy to offer advice and encouragement. If you would like to find out more about our SOS group in Grants Pass feel free to call me at (541)474-6847.

*- Jerry Reed is the organizer for CFI Rogue Valley Freethinkers Meetup and has family members struggling with alcoholism.*

## *A*ventures WITH Lisa

Imagine sailing into a tropical sunset with the trade winds gently filling the sails. That’s what these CFI members did recently on Friend of the Center-Matteo Luccio’s boat. . . except that it was on the Columbia River near Portland in July, and the breezes were probably not called “trade” winds!

Lisa Kendall has many more events coming up soon, including more cruises like this, Tyron Creek hikes, Tree Top Obstacle Course, women’s retreat, and others that you can find on the CFI Calendar. The tremendous amount of interest has created a need for logistical support. Lots of perks for volunteers! Call Lisa to help and for details: 503-719-1424





*Interview with Barry Ruffin, newest Advisory Board Member and Member of the Portland Humanist Film Fest Committee*

**CFI: Tell us a little about your background.**

**Barry:** I am a native of Philadelphia and grew up in the inner city, where I saw a lot of the problems that come with poverty, although we weren't poor ourselves. Most people in my family were very religious, very pious. As for myself, I could never make myself believe in this all-giving and all-merciful God. With the horrendous living conditions that I witnessed, I had a hard time understanding where this loving God was.

Around 1969, in those formative years, when I was 13, 14 years old, I identified with the message of the Nation of Islam and the self-determination they promoted. After all, black people had been praying for 300 years and got nothing. But they preached that whites were evil, the devil, that you could not trust them.

However, I knew whites who did not fit that description. There have always been decent whites.

I joined the Navy at 19, which was another pretty religious organization, and I could not understand how Christianity had become so successful. It just seemed to be unprovable. The seed of disbelief was in me all the time, and I never had an epiphany of faith. I came to Portland about the time I was discharged from the Navy and have lived here ever since.

**CFI: How did you decide you were a secular humanist?**

**Barry:** By looking at the plight of black people around the world. They live in the most deplorable condition. People think that praying to this god figure is giving them something, when in actuality they have nothing but a heartbeat. I realized that whenever I saw people who worked hard and went to school, I saw people who had to have it much better. It's better to do things instead of waiting for divine intervention.

**CFI: How did you find out about CFI?**

**Barry:** I had been reading a lot of stuff on atheism for a good five to ten years. Last year I saw an advertisement for Portland Humanist Film Fest. I didn't know of any organization or media format that promoted the concept of freethought, so I went there with my girlfriend, and we found it enjoyable. But I also saw a few things that could be improved, and instead of complaining, I decided to get involved.

Earlier this year I read something about the Freethought Conference at PSU. That's when I got full breadth of what CFI was

about: a dynamic organization of very intelligent people promoting positive non-belief.

**CFI: What is your role in CFI?**

**Barry:** I just joined the CFI Portland Advisory Board, and I am responsible for advertising and promotion of this year's Portland Humanist Film Fest. I went to check out the Seattle International Film Festival to get training and ideas. I want the Portland Humanist Film Fest to become the kind of event in which people drive hundreds of miles.

**CFI: What vision are you working towards with your volunteer efforts?**

**Barry:** I want to promote the concept of freethought, to contribute to a society in which people make rational decisions, based on reason. I think society benefits from that proposition of individualism and the world to a larger extent.

**CFI: What would you like CFI to become?**

**Barry:** Among others, I would like to see an effort to try to get more minority participation. I think that minorities especially would benefit from rational thought, because they have more challenges stacked against them in this country.

**CFI: Any thoughts you want to add?**

**Barry:** You cannot appease the religious. Some are upset by our very presence. It is not our jobs to allay their discomfort with us. I think that freethinkers will have to assert themselves even more in order not to be marginalized.

**CFI: Thank you!**

## Got Film?

The Portland Humanist Film Festival is calling for film submissions! Short or long, any independently made movie/ dvd that explores science, the natural world, cultivating reason, compassion, ethics and "of course" free speech and free inquiry - in other words, all the topics that you already spend time thinking about - is a candidate.

More info:  
[www.humanistfest.com](http://www.humanistfest.com)  
or email us at  
[info@humanistfest.com](mailto:info@humanistfest.com)  
Spread the word and follow us on Facebook:  
[www.facebook.com/HumanistFest](http://www.facebook.com/HumanistFest)



# CFI August Events

For more information about any of these events, late additions, or to RSVP, go to the CFI calendar at [www.meetup.com/cfi-portland/#calendar](http://www.meetup.com/cfi-portland/#calendar) and click on that event

**Wednesday, August 3, 7pm**

## CFI Freethinkers Book Group

*Breaking the Spell*, by Daniel C. Dennett

Powell's Books at Cedar Hills Crossing,  
3415 SW Cedar Hills Blvd  
Beaverton, OR

Organizer: Jeremiah

Religion as a natural phenomenon. Discussing the first half of the book this evening.

**Thursday, Aug 4 & 18, 11:45am**

## South Coast Skeptics Meetup

Denny's, 98 E. 1st St,  
Coquille, OR

Organizer: Greg Collver

Pizza and skeptical discussion at Denny's!

**Thursday, August 4, 7pm**

## Discussion Group What Do You Think About "Religious Naturalism"?

Murrayhill Condominiums  
Clubhouse  
9450 SW 146th Terrace  
Beaverton, OR

Organizer(s): Glen

Proponents of religious naturalism define religious naturalism as an "approach to spirituality that is devoid of supernaturalism." (Quote from suggested reading: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious\\_naturalism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_naturalism)). Come share your arguments for or critiques of this concept.

**Friday-Sunday, Aug. 5-7**

## Third Annual Freethinker's Campout!

Jesse M. Honeyman Memorial  
State Park  
84505 Hwy 101 South  
Florence, OR

Organizer(s): Kurt

Only one or two spaces left! \$29 per night (\$58 total). See CFI calendar online.

**Saturday, August 6, 2pm**

## Skeptics in the Pub

Round Table  
5016 NE Thurston Way  
Vancouver, WA

Organizer(s): Kurt

Meet local skeptics, atheists, secular humanists, scientific naturalists and other friends of reason for conversation and friendship! We meet in Vancouver but welcome people from anywhere.

Meetings are informal and social. Conversation is spirited and informative.

We meet at the Round Table by Westfield mall in Vancouver, in their banquet room, between 2 and 5 pm.



**Sunday, August 7 & 21, 11am**

## Eastside Sunday Brunch

Old Wives Tales  
1300 E Burnside St  
Portland, OR 97214  
503-238-0470

Organizer: Sylvia Benner

Please RSVP so we can reserve the correct number of seats.

A chance to meet and get to know others in the community over good food in a relaxed atmosphere! The restaurant has a children's menu and a separate play room for the little ones. Vegetarian dishes available.

**Wednesday, August 10, 5pm  
Saturday, August 20, 5pm**

## Summer Sailing Expedition

Matteo's Sailboat  
N. Pier 99 St, Portland, OR  
RSVP please.

Organizer: Lisa Kendall

Matteo has generously offered to take us on a sailing adventure in his lovely 30' boat.

(\$20 suggested donation, Friends of the Center, students, and the unemployed are FREE. Fees associated with events are intended to help us build this program. Your support is greatly appreciated.)

**Saturday, August 13, 1pm**

## Blueberry Picking

Bonnie Slope Blueberries  
3565 NW South Road  
Beaverton, OR

Organizer: Lisa Kendall

Let's go berry picking without the drive to Sauvie Island. Bring a blueberry container, water, and sunscreen.

# CFI August Events CONT'D

More details and RSVP: [www.meetup.com/cfi-portland/#calendar](http://www.meetup.com/cfi-portland/#calendar)

## **LATE-BREAKING SPECIAL EVENT!**

**Monday, August 15, 6:45**

Multnomah Art Center, 7688 SW Capitol Hwy, Portland

**Dr. Christopher DiCarlo**, Canadian "Humanist of the Year",

will talk about his new book, "*How to Become a Really Good Pain in the Ass*".

This witty and incisive guide to critical thinking provides you with the tools to allow you to question beliefs and assumptions held by those who claim to know what they're talking about – from politicians and lawyers to bankers, doctors, the divinely inspired, and even your boss. Admission is free for Friends of the Center (CFI members) and \$5 for non-members. Please RSVP at:

[http:// bit.ly/ovt13r](http://bit.ly/ovt13r)



**Friday, August 19, 7pm**

## **Skeptics of Eugene Monthly Meetup**

33733 Seavey Loop Rd,  
Eugene, OR

Host: Bob Hubbard

This is Open Topic so everyone is welcome to bring up a specific subject of interest and if there are copies of news items or articles you can share, please do. We are all interested in learning about our world with open minds and healthy skepticism.

**Saturday, August 20, 10am**

## **SHEP Lunch on extinct volcano: Walk & Talk on Powell Butte**

Meet at Tom & Sheila's,  
13642 SE Gladstone, Portland, OR

Organizer: Jon P

Join us for a guided walk on Powell Butte, an extinct cinder cone volcano in Southeast Portland. The land is now a nature park, but it was once covered by the Missoula Floods 13,000 to 15,000 years ago. Have your sack lunch on top and take in the expansive views of surrounding mountains.

**Saturday, August 27, 7pm**

## **Skeptics of Eugene Game Night**

Private Residence Near Downtown Eugene

Organizer(s): The Liberal Shop

If you have a game you'd like to share please bring it. We'll decide at the beginning of the evening which game(s) we'll play. I have 3 card tables, each can seat up to 6 people.

This Game Night will be at Lowell's house. If you've RSVPed we'll send directions to Lowell's house to you before the event.

**Sunday, August 28, 10:30am**

## **Monthly Westside Sunday Brunch**

Goodness Coffee House  
4925 SW Angel St  
Beaverton, OR 97005  
503-631-7270

Organizer(s): Sylvia Benner

Join us for a chance to meet and get to know others in the community over good food!

Please RSVP so we can anticipate the correct number of people and reserve some seats.

**Sunday, August 28, 10:30am**

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**Sunday, August 28, 1pm**

## **Explore Tryon Creek State Park**

Tryon Creek State Park  
SW Terwilliger Blvd  
(Meet @ entrance to Nature Ctr)

Organizer: Lisa Kendall

Oregon's only state park within a major metropolitan area. Tryon Creek is one of the only streams in the metro area with a run of steelhead trout. We will have a light picnic after in the Glenn Jackson Shelter. Please bring a favorite food and/or beverage. I worked as a nature guide for the public school program several years ago so I should remember a thing or two about the local flora and fauna.

**Wednesday, August 31, 7pm**

## **Beaverton Atheists Meetup**

Moonstruck Chocolate Cafe  
11705 SW Beaverton-Hillsdale Hwy,  
Beaverton, OR

Host: Alan Litchfield

Engaging, relaxing and interesting conversation at our monthly meeting.

# The Skeptic's Toolbox



**Eugene, OR Thursday - Sunday, August 11-14, 2011**

## How Smart People Go Wrong

Smart and accomplished individuals, sometimes even scientists, often support outrageous and unsubstantiated claims. For skeptics, it is important to understand why even intelligent people often think and behave irrationally.

This year's Skeptic's Toolbox will look at examples of such wrong-headed thinking in medicine, science, finance, and other areas of human endeavor. Both the faculty and the participants will explore the various factors that contribute to bad reasoning by otherwise smart people.



**HARRIET HALL** is a retired family physician and flight surgeon. A writer on the subjects of quackery, pseudoscience, critical thinking, and alternative medicine, Hall is also known as The SkepDoc from her regular column in Skeptic magazine. She is a contributing editor to both Skeptic and Skeptical Inquirer magazines, an editor of the Science-Based Medicine blog, and an advisor to Quackwatch.



**RAY HYMAN** is a professor emeritus of psychology at the University of Oregon and a CSI fellow. Ray is the creator of the Skeptic's Toolbox and the developer of the workshop syllabus. At a 2003 conference, he received CSI's highest honor with the In Praise of Reason award. For more about Ray, visit the transcript of James Alcock's presentation speech, which appeared in the March/April 2004 issue of the Skeptical Inquirer.



Philosopher, photographer, blogger, and polymath **LINDSAY BEYERSTEIN** is a freelance writer based in New York City. Her blog, Majikthise, provides daily coverage of local, national, and international politics from a left liberal perspective. Majikthise features original reporting, including Lindsay's photography.



**JAMES ALCOCK** is a CSI executive council member, professor of psychology at York University, and author of Parapsychology: Science or Magic? and Science and Supernature. He is also co-editor of Psi Wars.



**LOREN PANKRATZ** is a forensic psychologist at Oregon Health & Science University and a CSI fellow.

**For more info, and to register: [www.SkepticsToolbox.org](http://www.SkepticsToolbox.org)**



## Yes! I want to become a Friend of the Center!



- \$60 (Individual)
- \$80 (Family)
- \$250 (Supporter)
- \$500 (Patron)
- \$1500 (Lifetime)
- \$20 (Student)

NAME (PLEASE PRINT)

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Yes! Please sign me up to receive e-mails about CFI events and news in my community.

- Payment enclosed, or charge my:
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- Visa
- American Express
- Discover

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Contact the Center for Inquiry Portland at [portland@centerforinquiry.net](mailto:portland@centerforinquiry.net), or visit us online at [www.centerforinquiry.net/portland](http://www.centerforinquiry.net/portland)