

IDD-HUMANISTS NEWSLETTER

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The Newsletter of the *American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disorders'* (AAIDD)
Humanist Action Group – July, 2007 v.1 issue 3

This newsletter expresses the opinion of this subgroup and not necessarily of AAIDD

All data presented are opinions and alternative opinions may be printed in later issues.
Send feedback and submissions to jrmullin@verizon.net

Notes from the editor

I hope everyone is having a great summer. I hear it has been unusually hot in some parts of the country and hope you have been able to avoid that. Some new people signed up with this group over the quarter and now we are up to 12 members. I expect us to grow slowly but steadily. As I have written in the past two newsletters, I had hoped that this group would become involved in writing this newsletter since a “Jim Mullin” newsletter may not be the best or most interesting product. So let’s hear it from you at jrmullin@verizon.net .

To be frank, my wife and I been having the house renovated since May and we’re living out of boxes, many of which are stored in a portable storage container. The *only* things in the kitchen are the stove and table. Most everything else from the kitchen is stored in our pop-up trailer in the back yard. There is a missing wall in the bathroom which is a lot of fun. There are two other rooms which we can’t use. This has reduced us to a much simpler level of existence. When the renovations are eventually completed, I think the inconvenience will be worth it but until then, the newsletter won’t be as large as issue #2 without your help.



In this newsletter, we’re starting the discussion I had mentioned in the last issue about counseling a Humanist with IDD if they are approached by a friend who feels they should have religion. This is a larger topic than anticipated and it will continue over several newsletters. The first part of the discussion follows immediately. I would appreciate any feedback.

I’ve been including photos in these newsletters. Generally they have a theme although the theme may not relate to the written material. In the last issue we looked at New England spring flowers (which are one of the best things about living in an area with a snowy winter). In this issue, the theme is Parades with photos from the Boston Gay Pride Parade, which had a strong Unitarian Universalist supportive presence, and the Provincetown, MA, Portuguese Festival Parades, which I just found colorful. The Boston parade was impressive with the Governor and the Boston Mayor both marching in support of Gay issues including Same Sex Marriage. Same Sex Marriage was both supported and continued by legislative action several days later. Same Sex Marriages are generally supported

by Humanist Groups. In spite of the very vocal opposition to Same Sex Marriage which unfortunately continues even now, progress like this makes me proud to live in Massachusetts.

Jim Mullin

How do you talk to a person with IDD about Humanism in light of their friends' beliefs? (Part one)

In the last issue I suggested that we have a topic for subsequent issues. For this issue I suggested that we discuss how to react when someone with IDD has been approached by someone else who says that they should believe in God or a specific religion. This discussion assumes we think they should maintain humanist beliefs. It also assumes that we are important to this person and they are important to us. In preparing for this essay I found that this is a huge topic, larger than one newsletter should contain, so it will continue it over several issues.



If you do an internet search on this issue you find out one thing quickly: no one likes it when other religions try to convert their members. Nevertheless many religions feel that it is appropriate for them to do it to others. In fact some see it as their mission. Mormon men, for example, generally spend 2 years each in missionary work and we are all familiar with Jehovah's Witnesses knocking at our door on the weekend. These two are perhaps classic examples of religions that approach others to join them and there are many others. Additionally there appears to be an equal number of religious individuals who feel, on a personal

level, that they should do the same thing. Generally Humanists don't actively attempt to convert people to their views. Even in Humanism, though, there are movements like the New Atheism that are vocal enough about their beliefs that it is obvious that conversion is a large part of the intent behind their message.

In any effort of this type, there are two major elements. The first is the logical component and the second is the emotional component. One would think that the logical component would be all that one needs to hear to make up one's mind. After all, if a religious or non-religious belief system doesn't make

sense, then why should anyone believe in it? Shouldn't there be just one logical belief system and a large number of illogical systems? A review of the educational materials of most religions suggests otherwise. It seems all belief systems assume that they follow from the rules of logic. Some of them, like the Catholic Church make little *logical corrections* along the way. By logical corrections, I mean ways of explaining events which totally bypass logic. In the Catholic Church example, three groups of events referred to as *Mysteries* are ways of just taking illogical events out of the realm of discussion. The remain-

ing areas for discussion vaguely fit into a logical framework.

Other belief systems totally pervert logic. *Answers in Genesis* (AIG) (<http://www.Answersingenesis.org>) is a young earth creationist organization that I feel is an example of a group that totally perverts logic in their arguments. I feel they call the scientific method “circular logic” and then freely use circular logic in their arguments. I believe that they find extreme fringe science, like the



unlikely belief that the speed of light has changed over time or that the rate of continental drift was much faster in the past. They then use these “discoveries” to discount established scientific beliefs

and “prove” their belief that the earth is only 6000 years old. They appear to honestly believe what they write and that it is based on solid logic. I mention them as an example of a group that, although there is nothing in the traditional scientific world that supports them, believes that they make perfect sense. After visiting their website, I usually visit the National Center for Science Education website (<http://www.natcensci.ed.org>) to cure my headache and find more rational explanations of what AIG preaches.

People with IDD often have a weak sense of logic or at least one that is limited in the complexity of arguments that they can process. This is also found in the typical intelligence crowd but more so in the population with IDD. If someone can't exclude a solicitation based on logic, they are more susceptible to emotional appeals. In the next part of this essay we will discuss emotional appeals in relation to belief conversion for people with IDD.

Website News

Slowly but steadily the website advances. I've put in more content but there are still areas which need further development. The site is now listed in a few search engines which is a help. Note that if you look up MR or IDD and Humanism on any search engine, you find that our website is the only resource available in this area. With a little more content, we can begin to promote the site and increase our value as a resource.

I was also very interested in the recent article:

Zubal-Ruggieri, Rachael, *Making Links, Making Connections: Internet Resources for Self-Advocates and People With Developmental Disabilities; Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* v.45 (3) (June 2007)

The article had some great ideas about making a website more accessible to people with disabilities. It really pointed out areas in which our website needs work. The article is available for review at <http://www.aaid.org> if you don't have the journal nearby.

If you would like to help write a webpage or two, let me know. Visit the site at <http://www.aamr-humanists.org> and check it out!

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