

IAIDD-HUMANIST NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter of the

American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disorders (AAIDD) Humanist Action Group
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This newsletter expresses the opinion of members 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

For many readers, it's time to renew your AAIDD membership. I hope you remember this group when you pick groups to support. This is a small group with less than ten members. It supports a minority opinion in both AAIDD and society as a whole. I think it's important that we keep this identity even if it is small at this time. Our mission remains to provide support and information to people involved in intellectual disability and are humanists. If the group gets too small, it is likely that we won't be allowed to continue. I will maintain the website, anyway, but will not be able to mention the AAIDD. When I renew the website name in the spring, I will probably pick up a second name that does not mention AAIDD in case we end up going in that direction.

I have a tracking service on our website. It counts how many people have visited and when they did it. At one time we were almost never visited. Now we have several visitors a month. That is very encouraging considering we don't advertise. We also come up fairly frequently in search engines (like Google) if you pair "intellectual disability and humanism" in a search. This suggests we occupy a monopoly on this type of information.

For readers that aren't in AAIDD, it would be useful for me for you to send a note to the AAIDD and let them know what you thought about this site. If you are critical, which you are entitled to be, please send me a copy to so that I am not surprised by someone else bringing it up. Of course I would like supportive comments sent to me too. And as always, feel free to submit material to be included in this newsletter.

AN IMPORTANT QUESTION

I remember very clearly an incident which occurred a number of years back. A woman I worked with who had intellectual disabilities, Helen, had a good friend who had watched over her since she was a child. Since Helen lived in an institution, and the friend did not work there (she lived there), the care she provided was mostly to take Helen places and check in and make sure that all was right with her. She was very, very important to Helen and Helen often asked about her.

The friend was rather elderly by the time I was involved and had developed some form of senility. One day she wandered out into a swamp and died. We worried about telling Helen, first because we knew how important she was and secondly, because Helen could be explosively aggressive when disappointed. However, Helen's behavioral problems were the least of our concerns at the time so one of the staff who was also very close to Helen sat down with her and told her what happened. We were ready for almost any response except for what happened.

Helen was quiet and did not seem at all upset or disappointed. We asked her what had happened to the friend to see if she understood. Helen smiled and looked up towards the ceiling and said, "[she's] in Heaven". As long as I knew her, Helen was fine with that resolution of the friend's life.

Some Humanists believe in an afterlife but most others don't. The preceding paragraph would probably have been worded a lot differently if Helen did not believe in an afterlife. It is likely that Helen would have been aggressive and harbored a deep loss for a long while.

Here is my question, based on the above story: Should someone without a personal religion teach a loved one with intellectual disabilities a religion or mythology they personally don't believe in to help them get through tough times? I'd love to hear your opinion so email it in. Mine will be in the next issue along with any responses I get.

News and Updates

In October President Obama signed Rosa's law which changes and references the government uses from "mental retardation" to "intellectual disabilities". It also requires person-centered language: instead of "an intellectually disabled person" it will require references to say "a person with intellectual disabilities". The President has not been as effective in reforming faith-based initiatives, particularly those put in place in the previous administration. While he has made reforms in how these groups are funded and under what conditions, he has not made what many in the humanist family feel is a vital condition: that hiring of workers in groups that receive federal funds cannot be based on membership in a particular religion. Wanting to use a group's services or volunteer for a particular service that receives federal funding should not mean that a person who needs or wants to participate in delivering those services must adhere to a certain religious philosophy

According to the *Huffington Post*, the University of Maryland released the results of a study that showed people who relied on Fox news for their political information were more misinformed about American Political Issues than watchers of any other channel. You may want to reconsider where you get your news if you watch Fox news and you may want to keep impressionable people with intellectual disabilities from watching that network for news.

A year ago I mentioned a man I knew as a teenager who was given a lot of press because of alleged abuse at a group home. My concern at the time was that there was never followup in the news when these things happened. Danny died September 10th from a long illness

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