

# Society for Secular Humanists in Calgary



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## TV THE NEW PSYCHIC HOTLINE

There is a new crop of paranormal TV shows this year all claiming to be based on true events. The two I will address in this article are *The Ghost Whisperer* and *Medium*. The difference with these two programs from others is that they claim to be based on a "real" psychic's life, with those psychics acting as consultants on the shows. Of course, there isn't any harm if you watch these shows as pure entertainment, but the hype on these two is that they're real and of course, that the psychic's claims are also real.

With terrorism, tsunamis and many other natural disasters, people need to feel that there's some larger plan. There is also a generation of people that are into New Age theories. The popularity of psychic mediums is growing every day, and with shows like this on television, it feeds those needs with false credibility.

The media is portraying the psychic, Allison DuBois, for which the show *Medium* is based upon as the real deal. Her credentials according to the reports are "She assists police departments and works as a jury consultant, all free of charge — was a research medium at the University of Arizona, where she underwent tests for four years." What they fail to mention is that the police departments all vehemently deny that Ms. DuBois ever assisted them, and in so far as her tests of her abilities at the University of Arizona by Dr. Schwartz, they don't mention the questionability of Dr.

Schwartz's credentials, nor his testing methods. On the other show *The Ghost Whisperer*, the Medium Mary Ann Winkowski has her own credentials. Her claim to fame is that she can talk to ghosts, people that have died but not "crossed-over". Ms. Winkowski is a ghost-buster for hire. For \$100.00 she'll come and rid your home of any unwanted ghosts. Ms. Winkowski is also one of James Van Praagh's best friends. Mr. Van Praagh is also a consultant on the show, and like Ms. Winkowski a self-proclaimed psychic medium. The difference between Ms. Winkowski and James Van Praagh is that Mr. Praagh has been debunked many times as legitimate and I would suspect this

is only because Ms. Winkowski has not been in the spotlight very long and asked to prove her abilities like Mr. Praagh has. Both Allison DuBois and Ms. Winkowski claim to have realized their special "gift" when they were a small child, as do many other psychic mediums that claim to talk to the dead, i.e. John Edwards, Sylvia Brown, etc. They will all recollect a story from when they saw or talked to their first dead person, usually a dead relative.

Both of these two psychic mediums come across as the woman next door. They are likeable, have normal lives and families, and that's what makes them so popular. They don't look like your old psychic with the crystal balls, bandanas, and ugly jewelry. They are approachable, and of course claim to be using their special powers to only help people. Allison DuBois is probably the loudest in her claims of only doing good deeds and proclaiming how legitimate she is because of all the "free" work she does. What she fails to mention is that this free work isn't recognized by anyone. Self-proclamation is their only proof and for TV Networks and Journalists to proclaim these self-proclamations as fact is irresponsible.

A Gallup survey conducted in 1996 indicated that 20% of Americans believe that it is possible to communicate with the dead, while another 23% are unsure about the possibility. Out of those surveyed there was a significant gender difference with 24% of women indicating belief in comparison to 16% of men. There are also differences across religious affiliations, as 27% of Catholics believe in spirit communication in comparison to 16% of Protestants and 9% of Jews (Gallup 1996). In light of the popularity psychic mediums are now enjoying, I would suspect that these percentages are now much higher.

Continued on Page 3



***Our meetings have been moved back to the Brentwood Co-op!***

*To donate to the SHIC Library please contact: shic.news@gmail.com or call us at (403) 295-7532*

## THIS QUARTER'S MEETING DATES

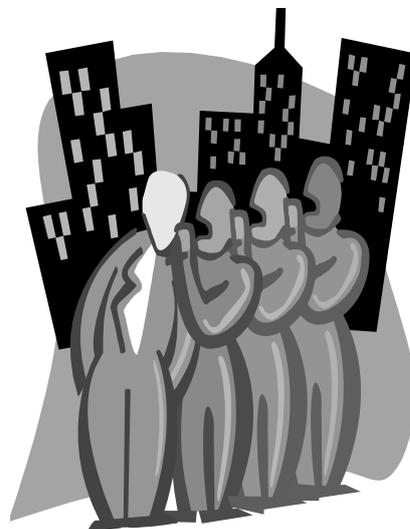
All our meetings are held in the Meeting Room downstairs at the Brentwood Calgary Co-op located at Brentwood Mall in the NW.

We also meet informally for Sunday brunches and discussion groups. A big thank you to our gracious hosts Dona and Ross for making our luncheons possible. Contact us for more details:

www.calgaryhumanist.ca or calgary\_humanists@yahoo.com

Our next meeting is February 23, 2005. This will be our annual general meeting and Elections for the new Board of Directors.

The meeting date for March is will be announced at a later date.



## LIBRARY NEWS

The library is available to all members at the monthly meetings. The books, videos, DVD's and cassettes may be taken out from the library free of charge for a one month period.

Many thanks to Dona, Peter and Eric for their kind donations to our library.

If anyone would like to donate items to our library, please contact one of the board-

members or email us shic.news@gmail.com.

Because of the large donations received for our library, we cannot list all items.

Pat Terrell  
Temp. Librarian

## SOLSTICE PARTY

Many thanks to our most gracious hostesses Dona and Ross for another successful Winter Solstice Party.

This is an annual event for the Calgary Secular Humanists.

If anyone has any ideas for a Summer Solstice event, please get in contact with Pat Terrell at

shic.news@gmail.com.

These parties are a wonderful way to meet new people and to also spend some time with old friends.

Again, thank you Dona and Ross for all your kind donations and opening up your residence to us!

Pat Terrell

# TV THE NEW PSYCHIC HOTLINE

Continued from Page 1.

So you are probably asking yourself, so who cares, who does it hurt? I don't believe in them, and those that do get the comfort they are looking for. Or do they? Psychic mediums no longer prey on the elderly with buckets of cash and little time left on this earth. They have a lucrative book business, just look in the New Age section, and they do live shows, give lectures, and of course for a fee they'll do private readings. There are a lot of people waiting in line for years to give these people money in that off chance that they will connect with a lost relative or friend. This is a multi-billion dollar business, and for some psychics, it's also a family business with proclamations that their children also have been blessed with their special abilities. Allison DuBois and TV psychic Sylvia Browne (appears on The Montel Williams show regularly) both make these claims. With Sylvia Browne, you can get a cheaper reading from her son if you can't afford the \$400.00 it takes to have her call you up on the telephone. Sylvia Browne has also started her own religion, with chapters all over the United States and Canada.

.I'm sure it won't be long before others follow this path of blurring the line of religion and psychic belief, after all what people want is comfort, guilt assuagement. And they get that: Your parents love you; you are forgiven; they are happy and in heaven with their family; they look forward to seeing you; it's not your fault they're dead; they no longer feel pain, etc."

There is the problem, when you give two physics (Allison DuBois and Mary Ann Win-kowski) credibility and spout how "real" they are, you are giving them and others like them open season on the weak and vulnerable. There will always be those people who will believe in a medium's abilities regardless of the facts presented to them to disprove those abilities. Giving credibility to where it doesn't belong is just as deceiving as the physic mediums themselves. Will psychic mediums become the new priests and priestess in this new age? I shudder at the thought!

© Pat Terrell - Editor



*"Psychic mediums no longer prey on the elderly with buckets of cash and little time left on this earth."*

## Letters to the Editor

\*"What proof would you require to justify your own belief in a deity?" Wednesday October 19 meeting\*

I want to point out a semantic mistake atheists make when framing these kinds of questions.

Proof and belief are mutually exclusive concepts. Things that I have proven to myself are things I know. I cannot believe in gravity because I can prove it to myself - actually the better way to say that is that proof removes the need or possibility of belief.

Belief can easily be defined as "conviction without evidence." It is a self-referential condition: I believe something for no other reason than I believe it. The moment someone says they believe in God because they saw/heard/felt it's presence, then they are saying that they know God exists. They might not be able to prove it to anyone else, but they have proven God to themselves.

As a reasoning, mature adult, I naturally want to remove belief as much as possible from my life; I can hope, want, desire many things to be true (such as the inherent

nobility of human nature), without having to fool myself they are already immutable truths. People might be, in essence, nasty, wretched, grasping vulgarities, but I prefer to work from the assumption they are not. What would I profit if I started to say people were inherently good and that this was a necessary truth (like the existence of a deity to the faithful), instead of being honest and saying we might indeed be bad, but I'd like to work from another assumption, one that I admit might be wrong and further, that I am fully prepared to change that assumption the moment the weight of evidence persuades me otherwise?

A better phrased question might be: What proof do you require as to God's existence, and short of that, what are you willing to believe and under what conditions?

John W. M.





## ON THE FRINGE OF SCIENCE

In celebration of the upcoming Darwin Day, here is an article re-printed from our Website by Mr. Eric Suderman..... enjoy!

Well, it has happened. In the aftermath of Darwin Day, yours truly has been browbeaten into giving equal time to the creationists. Upon reflection though, I realize that in the interests of "ideology-diversity" perhaps we should do our part to lend a hand to those philosophies endangered by science's indifferent natural selection. After all, science (it has been shown) has a truly narrow and pigheaded view when it comes to ideas. Science actually unfairly insists that these ideas model reality! Those ideas that do so survive and those that do not die or are consigned to the fringe no-mans-land of pseudo-science in this "survival-of-the-fittest" arena of science.

*"Creationism is a minority Christian movement dedicated to promoting the teaching of biblical creation myths in school science classes."*

And so begins my journey of discovery. I'd like to take this opportunity to offer the SHIC's seal of approval... uh... disclaimer. Some of the information in this article may lead to loss of cognitive ability if attempted to be taken seriously. Children should not under any circumstances read any of this without adult supervision. I cannot stress enough, "THINK RESPONSIBLY".

First off, I'm going to assume that most of you are aware of the claims of both science regarding evolution and creation science regarding biblical creation. Creationism is a minority Christian movement dedicated to promoting the teaching of biblical creation myths in school science classes. It also has the secondary goal of undermining the teaching of evolution in those same venues.

The first thing I ran into during my research was Carl Baugh's Creation Evidence Museum. To quote their mission statement:

Creation research involves interpretation of various facets of the creation model. These interpretations are consistent with the implications of the scientific research carried on by the museum. The entity thus holds to:

- A recent special creation by the personal Creator
- A literal six-day creation
- Biblical inerrancy and compatibility with scientific facts
- An original orchestrated universal design for the benefit of man, made originally in the image of the Creator

- The continuing concern of the Creator God in providing man's redemption and the ultimate restoration of an orchestrated universe, consistent with the creation model
- An original orchestrated universal design for the benefit of man, made originally in the image of the Creator
- The continuing concern of the Creator God in providing man's redemption and the ultimate restoration of an orchestrated universe, consistent with the creation model

These are the guys who helped push the infamous Paluxy River tracks on an unsuspecting world. These tracks were allegedly fossilized dinosaur tracks found alongside giant human footprints.

Moving right along, I came across the name of Dr. Kent Hovind. Dr. Hovind runs the Creation Science Evangelism site. I briefly skimmed over his site and was amused to find the "Pictures of Dinosaurs in the 20th Century" page. I wasn't familiar with every picture there, but I did recognize the half rotted carcass of the basking shark, the infamous Loch Ness monster and the monster of Lake Champlain.

I then turned my attention to Dr. Hovind himself. What, I asked myself, did Dr. Hovind receive his doctorate in? This proved to be more difficult to find out than I had anticipated. After much searching, I found out that Dr. Hovind holds a Ph.D. in education. What was more interesting is the story of "Patriot University" and his dynamic ever changing never published thesis. There are better write ups than mine on the subject. I suggest you look into one of them.

I'm going to include my very first exposure to creation science next. It was through Chick Publications. Chick Publications has been around longer than dirt. They produce those offensive little comic book tracts that everyone finds at pay phones. They are known for their attacks on Jews, Muslims, Catholics, rock music, gays, new agers and just about anyone else who doesn't toe the fundigelical party line. They use conspiracy theories and other fear tactics for the most part. Big Daddy is one of their older tracts. It was my first exposure to creation science. It is also about as unscientific as they come consisting mostly of appeals to ancient scripture and faulty reasoning.

Well, that's about all I can handle for the moment. I think that if I'm to seriously digest any more of this, my brain will liquefy and dribble out my ear. I'm willing and able to suspend my disbelief when I go to a theatre, but when expected to suspend by reason as well... There's only so much that can be expected of me!

© Eric Suderman - President

# NEW HAC BOARD MEMBERS

The following people have been acclaimed to the HAC board for 2006 - 2008.

**GARY BAUSLAUGH** -HAC and Victoria Secular HA member

**BILL BRODERICK** -HAC board director and Quinte HA member

**TONY CLARK** -HAC member in Edmonton

**DEREK KAILL** -HAC and HA London and Area member

**GAIL McCABE** -HAC board director and HA Toronto member

**PETER MOLLER** -HAC board director and HA Ottawa member

**PAT O'BRIEN** -HAC member and B.C. HA member

**GRAHAM ROSS-SMITH** - HAC and Victoria SHA member



## SHIC BOARD MEMBERS

Eric Suderman—President/Webmaster  
 Jeffrey Perkins—Past-President  
 Alexandra Vermunt—Secretary  
 Pat Terrell—Treasurer  
 Dennis Green  
 P. Robinson

You can contact any Board Member through our website [www.calgaryhumanist.ca](http://www.calgaryhumanist.ca)

"The truths of religion are never so well understood as by those who have lost the power of reasoning."  
 - Voltaire

## SHIC AGM AND ELECTIONS

On February 23, 2006 we will be holding our Annual General Meeting and the election for Board Members.

Now is the time to think about becoming a Board Member for SHIC. If you can devote a little time (an hour or two a month) and want to take a more active role in the direction of SHIC please enter your name for election.

The Board tries hard to provide services, meetings and topics that would interest all members. We can't do it without your input.

If you would like to run for the following positions, please contact Jeffrey Perkins or Pat Terrell as soon as possible!

- President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Member at Large



*Now is the time to think about becoming a Board Member!*



**Humanist Association of Canada**  
 P.O. Box 8752 Stn "T", Ottawa ON K1G 3J1  
 And  
**The Society for Secular Humanists in Calgary**  
 Treasurer, P.O. Box 1091, Stn "M", Calgary AB T2P 2K9

## Membership Form

Membership Category	HAC & SHIC		SHIC ONLY	
				<i>(for current HAC Members)</i>
Individual Membership	\$50.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$20.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Household Membership*	\$60.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$25.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Limited Income – Individual	\$25.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$10.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Limited Income – Household	\$35.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$15.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student	\$25.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$10.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Subscription to <i>Humanist in Canada</i>	\$18.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>(cheques/cash only For SHIC renewals)</i>	
	<b>TOTAL \$</b> _____		<b>\$</b> _____	

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Telephone# \_\_\_\_\_ Business# \_\_\_\_\_ Cell# \_\_\_\_\_  
 Fax# \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

**\*Household Memberships:**

Please give the names of all additional Humanists in your household 18 years or older:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

Do you wish to be listed in our Membership Directory? Yes  No   
 May we exchange your name with like minded organizations? Yes  No

Payment by Cheque  Money Order  Visa  Mastercard

Please complete the following if paying by credit card:

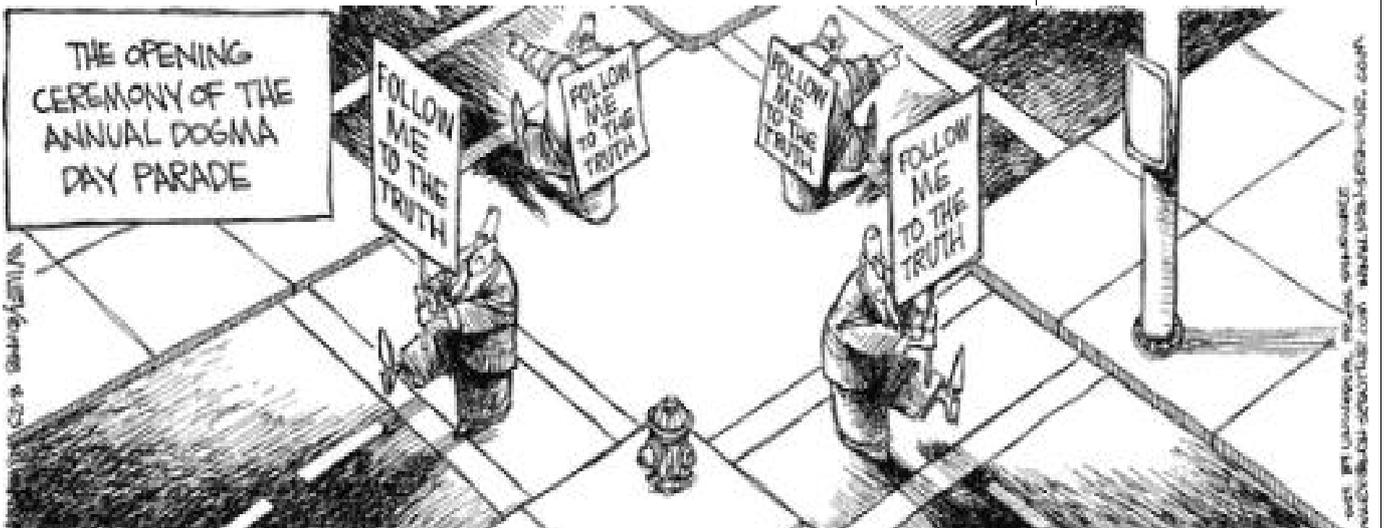
Account# \_\_\_\_\_  
 Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature : \_\_\_\_\_

Mail form & payment to the Calgary address above. Please make cheques payable to Humanist Association of Canada. If you are a current member of HAC and are renewing your membership with SHIC only, please make your cheques payable to SHIC.



"As long as a believer ascribes his views to his faith, he can say anything he wants and if you don't like it, you're the bigot."  
- Katha Pollitt



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Calgary**

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**We're on the WEB!**  
**www.calgaryhumanist.ca**

*Secular humanists do not rely upon gods or other supernatural forces to solve their problems or provide guidance for their conduct. They rely instead upon the application of reason, the lessons of history, and personal experience to form an ethical/moral foundation and to create meaning in life. Secular humanists look to the methodology of science as the most reliable source of information about what is factual or true about the universe we all share, acknowledging that new discoveries will always alter and expand our understanding of it and perhaps change our approach to ethical issues as well.*

## 2006 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Please renew your membership in SHIC today. Membership forms can be downloaded at [www.calgaryhumanist.ca](http://www.calgaryhumanist.ca), and they can also be picked up at the monthly meetings.

For 2006, we are continuing our affiliation with the Humanist Association of Canada (HAC) to offer reduced fees for joining both organizations at the same time. We encourage you to become a member of both SHIC and HAC. Lifetime memberships are also available.

Membership fees are for the calendar year.

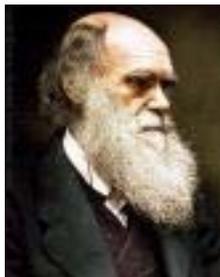
SHIC is a small, volunteer based organization that is totally dependant on membership fees and donations to function. You will receive a charitable tax receipt for your fees and donations as soon as possible after we receive them.

Thanks for your support!

## Secular Humanism

Secular Humanism is a term which has come into use in the last thirty years to describe a world view with the following elements and principles:

- A conviction that dogmas, ideologies and traditions, whether religious, political or social, must be weighed and tested by each individual and not simply accepted on faith.
- Commitment to the use of critical reason, factual evidence, and scientific methods of inquiry, rather than faith and mysticism, in seeking solutions to human problems and answers to important human questions.
- A primary concern with fulfillment, growth, and creativity for both the individual and humankind in general.
- A constant search for objective truth, with the understanding that new knowledge and experience constantly alter our imperfect perception of it.
- A concern for this life and a commitment to making it meaningful through better understanding of ourselves, our history, our intellectual and artistic achievements, and the outlooks of those who differ from us.
- A search for viable individual, social and political principles of ethical conduct, judging them on their ability to enhance human well-being and individual responsibility.
- A conviction that with reason, an open marketplace of ideas, good will, and tolerance, progress can be made in building a better world for ourselves and our children.



**February 12, 2006 is  
DARWIN DAY!!**

**EVOLVE and Celebrate!**