

scientia, artes, humanitas

March 2016 · Issue 3

Humanitas is a Latin noun meaning civility and kindness – getting along with each other and helping each other along. Stanislaus Humanists are people, without superstitious or supernatural beliefs, who come together to better the quality of life in our homes, our community, and around the world. Our compassion extends to all nations and to all living things. We hope this newsletter creates a supportive environment where people can cultivate and share insightful analysis, passion for human expression, and promotion of humane science-informed policies.

IN THIS ISSUE»

HUMANISM 102	PAGE 1
HUMANITARIANS	PAGE 2
DINNER TALKS	PAGE 3
PERSONAL GROWTH	PAGE 4
POEM	PAGE 4
GRAFFITI	PAGE 5
BEEES	PAGE 5
EVENTS	PAGE 6



We're always looking for new content – articles, reviews, commentary, pictures, poems, events. Send submissions to StanislausHumanists@gmail.com, or send a hard copy to:
1905 Kienitz Ave, Modesto, CA 95355

EDITOR'S NOTE

I know. It's been a while and you forgot we had a newsletter right? Well, we're back and we have a great selection for you. In this issue our contributors explore the kinds of impacts we can make in our communities. It's great that we're all skeptical and rational, but where can we go from there? Our writers this month offer a variety of options. We consider what it means to build institutional legacies, help our neighbors, improve our relationships, and even consider our culinary choices.

This issue also provides a great look at some of what we've been doing this year. Humanism 101 and now 102 have offered an excellent forum for all of us to discuss and explore more in depth where it is we agree and where we disagree. We've also had an incredible response to our new Humanitarian Humanists activities which have opened doors for our group to truly get involved in the community.

So check out our calendar and we hope to see you all out there in 2016!

HUMANISM 102: AN ATTEMPT TO BUILD AN INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY FOR INFIDELS

TROY SPEARS

Our Humanism 102 group has just finished the first four chapters in Susan Jacoby's *Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism*. The group is meant to allow us to flesh out our individual beliefs and practices against the backdrop of the nonbelievers and anticlerical movements throughout American history. However, a recurring theme in the book describes how movements for social change are sparked by nonbelievers and unorthodox thinkers, and then those courageous advocates are forgotten or written out of history once the orthodox religionists co-opt the movement. Jacoby writes:

Values are handed down more easily and thoroughly by permanent institutions than by marginalized radicals who, even if they change minds in their own generation — as the abolitionists did — are often subject to remarginalization in the next. Every brand of religion maintains and is a permanent mechanism for transmitting ideas and values — whether one regards those values as admirable or repugnant. Secularist movements, with their generally loose, nonhierarchical organization, lack the power to hand down and disseminate their heritage in a systematic way.

Many of us, traumatized by religious institutions, have no interest in setting up “congregations” to further our collective purposes and promote our worldview. Many nonbelievers are still nursing grudges against their former religions and congratulating themselves for having evolved past the poor sods still trying to live under onerous scriptural and clerical demands. But you might ask yourself

CONTINUED PAGE 4

HUMANITARIAN HUMANISTS

ACTING ON YOUR CONVICTIONS AS A HUMANIST



CHARLY MCISAAC

Many months ago, as we walked along the Dry Creek path in Modesto, my husband and I were discussing the future of the Stanislaus Humanists and what our vision was for the direction of the organization. On the one hand, I couldn't have been happier with the progress we, as a group, had made in creating a secular community with plenty of social activities and educational opportunities, and on the other hand I kept wondering what else we could be doing to not only grow our secular social circle, but to reach out and make a positive impact on the community at large. As we walked and talked we stumbled upon a large pile of trash littered all around one of the park's garbage cans. "Why, Modesto, must you be this way?" I thought as I looked down at what was a seriously gross pile of garbage, complete with a variety of stinky doggy bags.

Well, we noticed it and having just been discussing what we could do to improve our "positive impact on the community" we felt doubly obligated to start picking it up; there was no escape. I was thinking about how we needed to start bringing gloves with us everywhere for such occasions, and in my head I was repeating the mantra that my mother had taught me when I was little and I needed encouragement to complete one of the household's less than sanitary jobs, "You can always wash your hands, you can always wash your hands..." I said to myself. As I was drawing courage from this idea and flinging a doggy bag back into the trash can two teenage boys on skateboards stopped, "Oh man, this is so gross that someone did this, we can help you pick it up," one of them said to us.

"...people naturally want to do good and as social creatures we sometimes just need to have the opportunity to join someone to get us started."

That was so cool. I wanted to high five them, but realized my hands were disgusting and also that it probably wasn't cool to high-five anymore (if it ever was). So instead I just thanked them and together we picked up the pile of trash and went our separate ways. While it was a small gesture, I took a larger lesson from it as I was reminded that people naturally want to do good and as social creatures we sometimes just need to have the opportunity to join someone to get us started. "That is what we need," I thought, "more social service opportunities."

Like many of you, I identify as a Humanist for a variety of reasons. While I value natural explanations, reason, and science as a means for understanding the universe in which we live, to me Humanism goes way beyond critical thinking and science; it's a philosophy in which human beings, our potential for good, and our ability to solve our common problems through rational human solutions are valued above all else. In other words, I am not only passionate about cultivating a world in which we value and foster scientific progress, but also a world that fosters compassion for our fellow citizens of planet earth and recognizes our individual responsibility in solving the world's problems.

With this and the experience at the park in mind, I decided to launch our first Humanitarian Humanist activities. In November we teamed up with operation 9-2-99 to assist in the ongoing environmental clean up along the Tuolumne River, and then in December we connected with World Relief Modesto to see how we could support incoming refugees who were (and

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

INTERESTED IN MAKING A DIFFERENCE?

MARCH 19TH

**9 AM
RIVER CLEAN
UP AND PIZZA**

APRIL 23RD

**8:45 AM
LOVE
MODESTO**

MAY

**TO BE
ANNOUNCED**

**FOR MORE INFO
CHECK OUT OUR
WEBSITE, MEETUP,
OR FACEBOOK
PAGES.**

HUMANITARIAN (CONT.)

still are) resettling right here in the Central Valley. World Relief is a local nonprofit that assists refugees during the resettlement process. Because refugees must leave nearly all of their belongings behind, families often lack basic necessities such as pots, pans, dishes, and bedding when they arrive. With multiple families arriving every month of the year, and not always enough supplies to go around, this was an area where our group could make a difference, and as members of the group came together, we definitely did.

I made a goal of supplying 4 kitchen kits to World Relief for distribution to incoming families and then spread the word to the rest of the group through social media where the service activity received immediate and overwhelming support. We planned a potluck where we would collect and organize donations and there the support, compassion, and generosity of our Humanist group shined. We had more people attend this event than I remember seeing at nearly any other event in the past, and the supplies kept coming in. Before we knew it we had beat our goal, and together we were able to supply 6 families with full kitchen kits, while also being able to donate extra bedding and kitchen supplies that couldn't fit into one of the completed kits. There was such a great energy at the event and it was a great example of how we can come together as a group to improve our community and the lives of the people living here. With that, I hope to see you at our next service activity!

DISCUSSIONS AROUND THE DINNER TABLE**FREEDOM BAERHEIM**

strange to not talk about food during a dinner conversation; everyone likes food!"

However, as a vegan of four years now, I have noticed that no one likes to be questioned about their reasons for eating meat as they are trying to enjoy their chicken alfredo or steak. I have observed over the years that even bringing up the word vegan at the dinner table seems to get people's goat (pun intended.) I can understand to some degree the hesitation to discuss such a controversial subject, but it has always boggled me how simply asking someone why they eat meat makes them uncomfortably defensive, especially among the Humanist community.

As a Humanist, I love being able to use objective reasoning for my life and for the type of society I want to live in. I love the Humanist stance on compassion and helping others. When I became a vegan I used the same methods as I did when I started questioning and left my faith. I expected to see more support for a vegan lifestyle in the Humanist community, but to my surprise there was hardly any.

There is an old saying that goes, "Three things not to discuss at the dinner table: sex, religion, and politics." I believe one more should be added, and that is food. You might be thinking, "How

strange to not talk about food during a dinner conversation; everyone likes food!"

STILL WANT MORE WAYS TO GET INVOLVED?

We are currently looking for the next Public Service Assignment Leader. If you are interested in planning future service/volunteer activities please contact stanislaushumanists@gmail.com

OPERATION 9-2-99

Monthly ongoing clean-up effort along the Tuolumne River in Modesto between the 9th Street bridge and the 99 Freeway.

<https://sites.google.com/a/monet.k12.ca.us/gdhs-guptill-c/tuolumne-river-project>

WORLD RELIEF MODESTO

In need of English Tutors, Befrienders, Drivers, and much more in addition to donations of furniture and basic necessities.

<http://worldreliefmodesto.org/volunteer>

So why does there seem to be a disconnect between being a Humanist and being vegan? To me, being a vegan was the most logical choice. I only needed to change my diet, while still living the same lifestyle, but with a new focus on ethics, health, and sustainability. Just like leaving my faith, becoming a vegan was the most intellectually honest conclusion.

It seems as Humanists we are divided on this issue, and those who disagree tend to ridicule me in the same manner I would expect to see if someone went into a church and shouted, "There is no God!" Though I can assure you I have never felt personally threatened, I am taken aback at how absurd an idea people think being a vegan is.

Is there something I am not seeing? Have I been brainwashed into a vegan cult without knowing it? I want to live my life as objectively as possible, but I am only human and I succumb to emotional impulses like most people. I often wonder why it is so difficult to get others to relate to something that I see as one of the most important, ethical, and environmental decisions we can make.

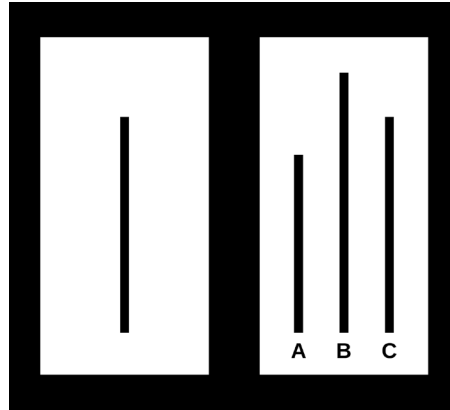
So I decided to start a podcast. I call it Vegan Heathens. It is a place where I can openly discuss skepticism and veganism. I plan to invite those who want to share their views as well, whether vegan or not. Perhaps somewhere among the conversations we can bridge this divide and come to some objective solution as to how we can better ourselves and the world around us. This includes all life, not just human. On my show, talking about sex, religion, politics, and especially food, will always be welcome. Please look for me (Vegan Heathens) on YouTube.

HUMANISM 102 (CONT.)

what sort of community and institutions would have helped you as you went through agonizing doubts, or the social pressure to toe the line, or the fear of losing friends and family upon disavowal of your former creed? Could we put such plans into motion for the next suffering nonbeliever? or for the next American generation?

Freethinkers also describes the backpedaling of nonbelievers in later life toward religion or spiritualism. American religiousness exerts a powerful and constant pressure on us to conform – or at least not disagree. Without institutions and vibrant communities, the nonbeliever only has her own moral and intellectual courage to bolster her against this cultural coercion.

In 1955, Solomon Asch conducted an experiment to test the human propensity to conform. The experimenters showed a vertical line to a group of men and then asked them to pick the line of the same length from three other lines. However, only one man in the group was actually being tested; the others were in on the deception and picked the wrong line on purpose.



EXAMPLE OF A CARD ASCH SHOWED SUBJECTS

lated their opinions in books and newspapers. For those coming after us, I would like to encourage all of you to contribute articles, letters to the editor, poems, pictures, or event promotions. And finally, I'd like to invite you to attend the rest of our Humanism 102 groups, The readings are posted on our Facebook and Meetup groups. The meetings take place on the third Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm, 1905 Kienitz Ave in Modesto.

Videos show the subjects becoming visibly uncomfortable when their peers confidently assert what the subject knows ain't so. Alone, the subjects were wrong 1% of the time. But in the group, their mistakes averaged over 36%. This is the sort of pressure that can lead many a proud materialist back to superstitious dogma.

I'm rushing this article to press without my usual thought and attention because I believe it's important for a community to have its own press to rally around. Many of the people in *Freethinkers* might have been entirely forgotten if they hadn't circu-



STEPHANIE MARSON

I was reminded this week that I'm a work in progress. I went into *task mode* and forgot that my "task" isn't just about getting things done, it's also (and more importantly) about taking care of people and building Stanislaus Humanists. If I go about that in a manner which demeans or dehumanizes someone, then I am working against my ideals as a Humanist and not living up to my full potential.

Lucky for me, there are people in my life who have the same values, and they want to see me realize my potential. I don't know about you, but it's hard for me to hear someone say that I acted like a jerk. It's easy to get defensive and close my ears and mind. That's not productive though, is it? Responding that way will guarantee I don't grow as a human, and I'm not okay with that. I appreciate the people who are brave enough to say, "Hey Steph, you really could have handled that better." Kind and sensitive confrontation opens up communication and grants opportunities for personal growth.

We are all simply trying to make it through this one life, and we need one another in order to do so. This year, I want to encourage you to get more involved with us, build deep friendships, and allow yourself to be vulnerable. It might be out of your comfort zone and a little frightening, but it just might be one of the best decisions you've ever made.

NOTHING ELSE MATTERS

ANTHONY EDWARDS

When doubt and desperation visit your door
Then leave you in ruin and tatters
A shoulder to cry on is all that you need
Because really, nothing else matters

When heartbreak steals the air that you breathe
And sorrow your very life shatters
An ear to listen can mean so much more
Because really, nothing else matters

When loneliness finds you with naught to your name
And your hope and security scatters
Company comes in a hand you can hold
Because really, nothing else matters

Nothing else matters more than a friend
When foul weather storms and batters
For love is what's left when you come to the end
Because really, nothing else matters

CLEANING UP GRAFFITI WITH AMANDA

INTERVIEW WITH AMANDA SORENSON



Are you compensated for your work?

No.

Do you buy your own materials?

For the most part yes. The county provides the graffiti wipes and we have gotten paint from Orchard Supply Hardware and money donations for supplies from people (and a few businesses) in Salida. All other materials (gloves, Clorox wipes, spray paint, spray bottle, pumice stone, metal scrubbers) I pay for myself.

When did you first begin cleaning up Graffiti?

About a year and a half ago when Salida

got hit hard by graffiti.

What motivated you to get involved? Describe a typical clean up job.

I didn't like seeing the graffiti so instead of just complaining about it, I (along with other volunteers) decided to actually clean it up.

A typical graffiti job starts with taking a picture of the graffiti. Then

(depending on the surface, metal is easiest to clean) scrubbing it with a graffiti remover wipe until the graffiti is removed. Then wipe it down with a Clorox wipe and then taking a picture of the clean surface. For graffiti on stucco, we paint over it. Different surfaces require different methods of clean up. We keep a record of all graffiti we clean and turn it over to the sheriff department. We have prosecuted about 4 people so far for graffiti (2 felonies and 2 misdemeanors).

Some readers might be interested in getting involved too, how can they get started? What advice would you give them?

It's really easy to build a graffiti kit as you can buy most of the items at the store. Graffiti remover products are sold on Amazon. If you live in a city (Modesto, Turlock, Ceres, etc.) contact the city public works or environmental resources department and see if they have citizen graffiti kits. If you live in an unincorporated community (Salida, Keyes, Denair, etc.) you can contact Stanislaus County public works and ask for the graffiti wipes.

The best advice I have is to get out and just start cleaning! The best deterrent to graffiti is rapid removal and to not be scared about any type of 'retaliation'. I've been cleaning graffiti for over a year and have even been in the [Modesto Bee](#) with my name and a picture of me cleaning graffiti and haven't had anything happen to me. I've even supervised the community service hours of one of our taggers and was able to help him get away from his toxic friends.

BEE FRIENDLY WEED KILLER

BRANDILYN BROWN

California is in trouble! We are in our fourth year of historic drought, but California feeds the world! We have to be smart with our water usage to save our crops, but one of the factors we don't really think about when it comes to growing our food is our bee population.

Using bee-friendly weed killer is a great way to ensure our bees can harvest pollen without also consuming harsh pesticides and contaminating their hives and their honey. Not to mention that making weed killer at home is super cheap!

You will need 1 gallon of vinegar (around \$3), one half of a bottle of dish soap (also around \$3), and something to mix and spray it with. I used a pump I bought at OSH but you can even use an empty cleaner bottle of some kind, as long as it has been rinsed out very well.

Once mixed, drench the weeds stalk to the root. If you have tall weeds, you will need less weed killer if you cut them short or weed-whack them first.

My back yard, which is mostly rocks, is about 500 sq. feet, and I didn't need to spray the whole thing, only the parts where weeds were growing. It took about an hour.



This mix takes 2 days before you notice the weeds dying, and it will be about a week before they are dead enough to pull straight from the ground without much effort.

This recipe, which I found via a Google search, is reported to kill everything it touches, and is therefore not safe to use in gardens. I have found that to be true, so use this only in areas you want everything to die.

Let's do what we can to save the bees!

EVENTS!

JOIN US FOR OUR REGULAR EVENTS!

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 ST	ACOUSTIC JAM 3:00 PM PRIVATE HOME, MODESTO		BOOK GROUP 7:00 PM PRIVATE HOME, CERES			CRITICAL DRINKING 7:00 PM MINNIES RESTAURANT, MODESTO	MOVIE NIGHT 7:00 PM PRIVATE HOME, MODESTO
2 ND	THEMED POTLUCK BRUNCH NOON PRIVATE HOME, HUGHSON		MUSIC & MAYHEM 6:00 PM PRIVATE HOME, CERES			GAME NIGHT 7:00 PM PRIVATE HOME, SALIDA	
3 RD	COFFEE KLATCH 11:00 AM QUEEN BEAN MODESTO		HUMANISM 102: HIST. OF FREE THOUGHT 7:00 PM PRIVATE HOME, MODESTO	COLLOQUIUM (BIMONTHLY) 7:15 PM MANTECA LIBRARY, MANTECA			FILM DISCUSSION 7:00 PM PRIVATE HOME, MODESTO
4 TH	TURLOCK BRUNCH 10:00 AM PANERA TURLOCK		MUSIC & MAYHEM 6:00 PM PRIVATE HOME, CERES			FINALLY FRIDAY KARAOKE 9:00 PM RIDGWAYS RESTAURANT, MODESTO	

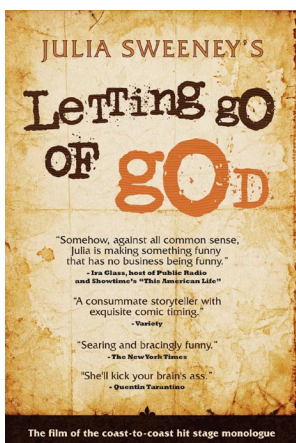
FOR MORE ACCURATE INFORMATION ON ANY OF THESE EVENTS PLEASE VISIT US AT STANISLAUSHUMANISTS.ORG OR OUR [FACEBOOK](#) & [MEETUP](#) PAGES.

FILM DISCUSSIONS

Watch and discuss an informative documentary in a comfortable living room setting. After the screening, we discuss what we disagreed with and what we liked about the presentation. Feel free to bring refreshments to suit your taste.

MARCH 19:

7:00 PM
1905 KIENITZ AVE, MODESTO



Letting Go of God is a humorous monologue by Julia Sweeney chronicling her search for God. She begins in the Catholic church, the religion her family raised her in, and takes a Bible study class. What she learns there leads her to new questions, and in her search for answers she explores meditation, Buddhism and New Age gurus. She then describes what she learned from the sciences and from sharpening her critical thinking skills. She discovers that to accept the truth leads to surprising revelations, and she concludes by sharing how this effects her family.

STANISLAUS HUMANIST T-SHIRTS



Black T-shirt available in Men's and Women's, S, M, L, XL, and 2XL. Get yours as an appreciation gift for donations of \$25 or more. Members can request one for donations of \$20. Make check or money order payable to Stanislaus Humanists, 1905 Kienitz Ave, Modesto, CA 95355, or donate online and tell us your size and where to ship.



**COLLOQUIUM:
ROBIN HAYES,
MY CELLS MADE ME DO IT
MARCH 16, 7:15 PM**

On the third Wednesday of every other month, we invite a fascinating speaker to our local area. This is a free event, open to the public, at the Manteca Library.

Our speaker will explore human behavior as a matter of cellular responses to environmental cues, the concept of cellular determinism. Free will is just an illusion!

About the Speaker

Professor of microbiology at Hartnell College. Robin Hayes has conducted research at Hopkins Marine Station, prepared educational material for the Monterey Bay Aquarium, and served as the senior laboratory analyst for the largest water reclamation project in the nation.

His book, *My Cells Made Me Do It*, is available in print and via Kindle at Amazon.com

**BRUNCH AT
THE DOUBLE T
APRIL 17
11:00 AM**



From the Double T website, “The backdrop to this enchanting facility is the The History Train. It is lead by a vintage 1887 steam locomotive, the oldest Union Pacific steam locomotive in existence. The foreground to this venue is the turn of century Victorian home. Together with the museum, gardens, dining area, wedding pavilion and dance barn, this venue is a welcome change that you and your guests will talk about for years to come.”

We have a semi-private area reserved. Please RSVP so that we can request a larger area if needed. Bring a dish to share with the group and the beverage of your choice. Plates and utensils will be provided.

NOTE: Your GPS will NOT get you to The Double T. Please print this map for best results: <http://www.thedoublet.com/map.html>

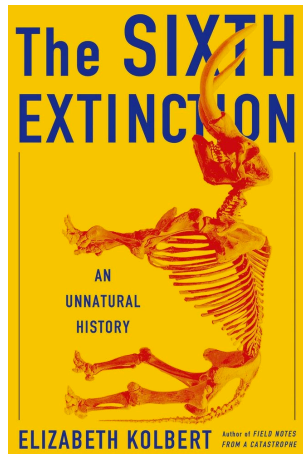
BOOK CLUB

Please come whether you enjoyed the book, hated the book, or didn't quite finish it! Every month we try to rotate through a variety of viewpoints and subjects. Sometimes that's fiction, history, biology, sociology, economics, theology, or philosophy.

RSVP ON OUR WEBSITE, FACEBOOK, OR MEETUP FOR THE ADDRESS.

APRIL 5

7:00 PM

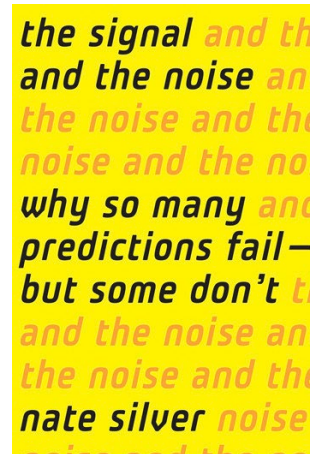


THE SIXTH EXTINCTION
ELIZABETH KOLBERT

“Over the last half a billion years, there have been five mass extinctions, when the diversity of life on earth suddenly and dramatically contracted. Scientists around the world are currently monitoring the sixth extinction, predicted to be the most devastating extinction event since the asteroid impact that wiped out the dinosaurs. This time around, the cataclysm is us.”

MAY 3

7:00 PM



THE SIGNAL AND THE NOISE
NATE SILVER

“Drawing on his own groundbreaking work, Silver examines the world of prediction, investigating how we can distinguish a true signal from a universe of noisy data. Most predictions fail, often at great cost to society, because most of us have a poor understanding of probability and uncertainty. With everything from the health of the global economy to our ability to fight terrorism dependent on the quality of our predictions, Nate Silver's insights are an essential read.”

BECOME A MEMBER

NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

MEMBERSHIP TYPE (CHECK ONE)

INDIVIDUAL (\$24/YEAR) COUPLE (\$36/YEAR)

PLEASE READ THE PRINCIPLES OF HUMANISM AND CHECK THE BOX:

I HAVE READ THE PRINCIPLES OF HUMANISM AND I SUBSTANTIALLY AGREE WITH THE PRINCIPLES STATED.

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO STANISLAUS HUMANISTS. ACTIVE MEMBERS RECEIVE DISCOUNTS ON CLOTHES AND MERCHANDISE. ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP IS REQUIRED TO BE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OR TO SIT ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS. SEND YOUR APPLICATION AND CHECK TO:

**STANISLAUS HUMANISTS
1905 KIENITZ AVENUE
MODESTO, CA 95355**

YOU CAN ALSO APPLY ONLINE AT:

WWW.STANISLAUSHUMANISTS.ORG/MEMBERSHIP.HTML

PRINCIPLES OF HUMANISM

Humanism is a naturalistic philosophy, informed by science, inspired by art, and motivated by compassion. The document Humanism and Its Aspirations* states six basic principles with which AHA and chapter members should substantially agree:

- 1.** Knowledge of the world is derived by observation, experimentation, and rational analysis.
- 2.** Humans are an integral part of nature, the result of unguided evolutionary change.
- 3.** Ethical values are derived from human need and interest as tested by experience.
- 4.** Life's fulfillment emerges from individual participation in the service of humane ideals.
- 5.** Humans are social by nature and find meaning in relationships.
- 6.** Working to benefit society maximizes individual happiness.

*The full text of Humanism and Its Aspirations can be found at www.americanhumanist.org/Humanism/Humanist_Manifesto_III



We're always looking for new content – articles, reviews, commentary, pictures, poems, events. Send submissions to StanislausHumanists@gmail.com, or send a hard copy to: 1905 Kienitz Ave, Modesto, CA 95355