FFRF makes the news every day

FFRF’s state/church work, litigation and educational campaigns generated over 300,000 on-line articles and stories about FFRF in daily and online newspapers in 2015, plus more than 304 local and national TV shows and appearances. Among staff appearances, FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor appeared on national “CBS Sunday Morning” on Oct. 31, talking about the mass baptism of Georgia high school football players—which our complaint halted for the future. She also appeared on Sean Hannity on July 9, where it was famously foul and stilted one! You can see her shows, or read and watch media coverage daily at ffrf.org/news/media.

FFRF generates on its own media. At the year’s end, we said goodbye to Bill Dunn as editor of Freethought Today, published 10 times a year, and welcomed his colleague, also a former staff member at The Capital Times newspaper, PJ Stiller. Bill’s part-time job to continue to compile Black Collar Crimes.

Freethought Radio, a weekly radio show and podcast, hosted by Dan Barker and Annie Laurie Gaylor, celebrated its 500th show in early December. In December, FFRF hit the other landmark, beginning to broadcast from its own Stephen Uhl “Friendly Atheist” Studio. The radio show broadcasts exclusively in Madison, Wis., 92.1 FM., streaming on Saturdays at 11 a.m. CST. All-time stats: FFRF made 316,583 podcast listeners since 2006, and averages 13,000 downloads per weekly show. (See wrap for other broadcast cities.)

FFRF maintains a timely and detailed website full of news, views, blogs, archives, online versions of Freethought Today, ads, films and photos. FFRF posted 49 public action alerts (plus many unpublicized alerts to members in particular regions) and 49 public action alerts (plus many unpublicized alerts to members in particular regions).

New Freethought Now! blog. FFRF posted 87 blogs this year, including 54 “New Freethought Now!” entries and 34 press releases and 49 public action alerts (plus many unpublicized alerts to members in particular regions).

FFRF is running a New Freethought Now! blog at blog.frf.org. FFRF’s blog is part of the Atheist Channel, which produces a Manhattan Institution “Friendly Atheist” blog. We thank Staff Attorney Andrew Saida for his initiative in suggesting and setting this up. Access FFRF’s blog at patheos.com/blogs/freethought-now/. Analytics show that the blog is introducing a younger audience, 46% female, 54% male, logging more than 275,000 page views and generating a modest income for FFRF.

FFRF has 351,658 “friends” on Facebook and 37,154 followers on Twitter. Look for FFRF’s new TV show this year, produced in the Stephen Uhl Friendly Atheist Studio!

PR/educational campaigns continue

TV advertising. FFRF placed the extensive Ron Reagan TV commercial on CNN periodically in 2015 and ran Ron’s ad on the penultimate Sunday Show (Comedy Central). All other major networks have considered our ad. Apparently, when the son of a former Republican president comes out “unashamedly” as an atheist, “not afraid of burning in hell,” it’s too powerful a message.

Print advertising. FFRF is running successful monthly one-third page ads in Scientific American featuring testimo- nies by scientists or scientific thinkers, many of them honorary officers of FFRF, including FFRF’s Honorary President Steven Pinker. FFRF placed several prominent full-page ads protecting the pope’s address to Congress in September, and a two-page ad in the New York Times on Bill of Rights Day (Dec. 15).

$35,850 in student essay scholarships

In 2015, the William J. Schultz Memorial Scholarship, for college-bound high school seniors, received a record number of students. Seniors picked from two topics, “Why I’m good without God” or “Atheistcrawler.com” was awarded top winners in both categories for a total of 23 students and $17,950 in prizes. The college competition recruited Professor Brian Bolton, a sociology professor, awarded a total of $9,250 in scholarships to 11 college students. FFRF’s Member Professor Brian Bolton sponsors the graduate student essay competition, which had eight winners receiving a total of $8,650 in prizes.

Dorean and Dean Schramm provided each winning student who is a member of a local freethought club (or FFRF) with a $50-$100 bonus.

$32,000 awarded to 11 student activists

Ten thousand dollars from the Cath- erine Fahlgren Memorial Student Activist Award was awarded to four on- going, freethinking college students of national and local importance, financial need, in partnership with Black Skeptics of Los Angeles.

Awarded $2,500 each were: Arielle Hawkins, Zoë Montamayor, Adrienne Parks and Thorns Wilson.

Three young high school students in New York City, graduates of New York’s religious schools, won the $5,000 scholarship. They are: Abdul Aziz, a New York student who fought his school for two years in an effort to get religious instructions removed from his public school, and a two-page ad in the New York Times on Bill of Rights Day (Dec. 15).

$1,000 awards were: Gabriella Ferrell, the Allen P. Wilkinson Student Activist Award; Lily San Giovanni, the Strong Backbone Student Activist Award (endowed by a New York member, age 81); and Morgan Turner, in memory of Tony Ross. Legal Intern Janice Iwdo, who worked all three years of law school for FFRF, received $1,000 from the Paul J. Gaylor Memorial Scholarship.

Ewan McCartney, grade 8, received the Mingin Zhang Student Award of $1,000 for sitting down for his rights (protesting the religious Pledge of Allegiance) in Seattle. Benjamin Oyakawa received the $1,000 Thomas Jefferson Youth Activist Award (endowed by Len and Karen Eisenberg) for successfully going after religious entanglements. Three special teenagers each received the $1,000 Richard and June Wil- son Student Activist Award for significant accomplishments. They include the student plaintiff in FFRF’s high school case of a Ten Commandments marker at a Penn- sylvania high school, and the recipient involved in similar litigation in another Pennsylvania school. Also receiving $5,000 was Thomas Sheedy, a New York student who fought his school for two years for the right to start a secular club.

Ingrids Laas photo

WIL veteran Joseph Cunningham stands next to the Athiest Studio in the new building and topping that with a full-floor concert grand piano. Members hunted the just-cleaned Rose Zwick Memorial Garden and Courtyard with members’ pavers, the Atheists in Foxholes monument honoring freethinking vets, the vestible with memorial and member tiles, the Annie Nicole Gaylor Lobby with plaques naming our generous major donors, the Brian Bolton Executive Wing and Patrick O’Reilly Editorial Wing (first floor), the Diane Uhl Legal Wing, 2nd floor, the Harold Erickson Public Relations Wing, the Joel B. Landon & Wanda Y. Beers Freethought Library, and the Stephen Uhl “Friendly Atheist” Studio – 3rd floor. The Lower Level meeting area is named the Harold Lonsdale “No Hell Below Us” Wing, and the cupola with views of the Wisconsin State Capitol is called the Kenneth Proulx “Above Us Only Sky.” FFRF also erected the first-ever “atheist marquee,” an educational digital signboard.

Ciam Wheatley’s silicone sculpture of Charles Darwin, a life-like, life-sized mannequin, amazes visitors to the library, and serves as a photo op.
FFRF creates Nonbelief Relief
Nonbelief Relief, Inc., was newly
incorporated in mid-2015, with FFRF as its sole member. It is made up of
Annie Laurie Gaylor, Dan Barker, Jim Zer
wick, Stephen Hite and Lisa Strand as
secretary/treasurer. Nonbelief Relief seeks
to remediate conditions of human suf
dering and injustice, whether the result of
natural disasters, human actions or adherence
to religious dogma. It also seeks to provide
assistance for individuals targeted for non
belief, secular activism or blasphemy. Non
belief Relief additionally will be challenging
the IRS’s privileging of churches and their
champions by seeking tax exemption without
filing the annual Form 990 (although it will
post the form for the public). In 2015, Non
belief Relief sent $74,500, including
$20,000 to Doctors Without Borders
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Army, killing 22 people and injuring
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1. Violations in public schools, 2. In God We Trust. 3. Mis
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9. Legislation 10. Legislative Prayer

Chris Line photo

Lauren Seeho photo

Ingrid Laas photos

Ernie Chambers

The cover of FFRF's 'Pray to Play' report.

FFRF current staff photographed at solstice displays at Wisconsin capitol

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