

# It's the hammer of justice



Joe Chavez (right) and "Black Jesus" pose after putting up FFRF's Winter Solstice banner Dec. 23 at the Gladwin County Courthouse in Gladwin, Mich. Joe said the hammer came in handy to install the posts and as a photo prop. "I thought it would be symbolic (Jesus nailed to a cross) and also for Thor's hammer. Oddly, no Christians were around to stone us as per their instruction manual (aka the bible)."

FFRF has been sending nativity scene complaint letters to the Gladwin County Board for more than a year. The decision to include the freethought banner was a direct result of a Dec. 6 ultimatum by FFRF Staff Attorney Stephanie Schmitt, who advised the county to either remove the unconstitutional Christian display or open the grounds as an open forum to other holiday displays, including secular ones.

## Educating Indiana



FFRF member Greg Stuart stands in front of one of three FFRF billboards put up in December in Brookville, Ind. The billboards say "Reason's Greetings from the Freedom From Religion Foundation" and "Imagine No Religion." FFRF sent several legal letters of complaint in 2010 about a nativity scene at the Franklin County Courthouse in Brookville. The town owns a large nativity display and set it up in the middle of the lawn with a flagpole in the center. An angel and star affixed to the pole appeared to be sprouting from the manger scene. The display was illuminated at night with no other decorations nearby. FFRF found the juxtaposition of the flagpole with a Christian manger scene particularly disturbing, saying that it appeared to tie patriotism to Christian beliefs. Franklin County made some nominal moves last Christmas (photo above) to better comply with Supreme Court rulings, moving reindeer closer to the crèche and moving the display away from the flagpole.



## Hello, Rhode Island freethinkers!

Members of FFRF and the Humanists of Rhode Island gathered Jan. 15 in front of FFRF's first billboard of 2012, and its first caveat on election-year theopolitics. FFRF has placed more than 700 billboards in 34 states since late 2007. This was its first billboard in Rhode Island. The 14x48-foot billboard is highly visible off Interstate 295 at Route 2 in Warwick. It will stay up until March. The photo shoot was arranged by FFRF member Steve Ahlquist (uncle of teen state-church litigant Jessica Ahlquist) and FFRF member Debbie Flitman, who scouted the billboard site). Steve is kneeling, front row, in suit and tie, and Debbie is beside him with Gus the dog. A smiling Jessica Ahlquist is in the second row, third from right. The photo was taken only days after Jessica's Jan. 11 resounding federal court victory ordering her high school to remove a prayer banner (see front page story).

Debbie Weisman Claise (standing, wearing a scarf at far right in the second row) was the student plaintiff in the historic 1992 *Lee v. Weisman* Supreme Court 5-4 decision, which ruled that prayers at public school graduations are unconstitutional. Debbie and her parents, Daniel and Vivian, and her sister Merith, the original complainant, were honored as Freethinkers of the Year at FFRF's 1992 convention in San Antonio, Texas.

## FFRF co-ed day care



Dexter Markert (left) and Clara Douglas visited the FFRF office on the same day. Dexter, 3 months, is the son of Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert and Michael Markert. Clara, 5 months, is the daughter of Office Manager Jackie Douglas and Matt Douglas.