

SACRAMENTO AREA SKEPTICS NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2010

GENERAL SCIENCE AND SKEPTICISM NEWS

The future of the JREF

At the turn of the new year DJ Grothe took over as new president of the JREF. He has shared some details for the future of the organization, expanding on things we know and love about the JREF as well as introducing new, focused efforts.

He intends to expand the million dollar challenge and offer more conferences, both regionally in the US and internationally. New ideas for the JREF include more focus on promoting science and critical thinking among school children and outreach to grassroots skeptical organizations.

Sylvia Browne performance crashed

At the end of December, “psychic” Sylvia Browne was doing a show in LA. During her show certain numbers are called that give people in the audience a chance to ask her a question. Skeptic and professional magician Mark Edward was one of the lucky number-holders.

He used the opportunity to put on a performance piece, where he “heard voices” saying names in his head. Then he repeated the names. But they were names of real people in Sylvia’s past about whom she had made inaccurate predictions. Was Edwards effective in his “punk” of Sylvia, or did his attempt merely fly over the heads of those in the audience?

Lawsuit against CA Science Center

The California Science Center based in LA is being charged in a lawsuit by the American Freedom Alliance for violating the group’s First Amendment rights.

The AFA was going to premiere a movie at the CSC’s IMAX theater titled *Darwin’s Dilemma*. The feature-length “documentary” criticized Darwin and promoted intelligent design. Helping to promote the event was the Discovery Institute, who touted the event as being associated with the Smithsonian. After failed requests by the CSC for a correction of this error and complaints from the Smithsonian, the CSC canceled the AFA’s screening. Mass science conspiracy?

Sense About Science celebrity wackos

Sense About Science’s (<http://www.senseabout-science.org.uk>) January list of wacky claims made by scientifically challenged celebrities in the preceding year has finally made it possible for skeptical views to get some regular coverage in mainstream news.

It’s no surprise that Sarah Palin made the 2009 list for her views on evolution. Former James Bond star Roger Moore has been named for saying foie gras paté causes Alzheimer’s disease. And vegan Heather Mills (Paul McCartney’s ex) was cited for her claim that meat stays in your intestines for 40 years and putrefies inside your digestive system.

For a full report, visit www.newscientist.com/article/dn18336-politicians-and-celebrities-shamed-for-science-gaffes.html.

Upcoming events

SAS events

Feb. 19: February Drinking Skeptically

Feb. 20: SAS Lecture - Glenn Branch

NCSE Deputy Director, will present the history and prospects of creationism.

Related events

Jan. 21: AGASA: PZ Meyers at UC Davis

Jan. 26: Sac City Freethinkers: PZ Meyers at Sac City College

Feb. 7: Sacramento Darwin Day

■ **Announcement: Skeptics can assist the people of Haiti by donating to such secular charities as the American Humanist Association and the American Red Cross.**